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Dominic Reilly

Gay men, Grindr, and the racialisation of
'desire *as* sexuality': a psychosocial
investigation.

A thesis submitted to the Department of Psychosocial
Studies, Birkbeck, University of London, in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(PhD).

I confirm that the work contained within this thesis is all my own.

D. Reilly, 25/11/2019.

Re-signed to acknowledge corrections on: 10/07/2020

Abstract

Within gay male cultures, long-standing debates about racialised sexuality, often framed in terms of “racial preference”, have carried over into emergent critiques of hook-up and dating apps such as Grindr. Within this project, I seek to contribute to these debates by advancing a framework I call the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’ (‘RoDaS’). ‘RoDaS’ brings psychoanalytic theories of sexuality into conversation with queer and queer of colour theory, and black and “quare” studies, while drawing on racial formation theory, psychic and phenomenological theories of ‘race’, and critical race theory to limn the symbiosis that lies at the nexus of ‘race’ and sexuality. Moving from theory to the field, I apply ‘RoDaS’ at two sites: on Grindr, formulated as an “infrastructure of intimacy” where racialised sexualities are enacted and co-constructed, and where I decode the latent and manifest meanings of racialised profile texts through a theoretically-driven thematic analysis; and in biographical research interviews, conducted with White and Black MSM who identified as having a “racial preference” in sex and dating.

Constructing the ‘RoDaS’ framework in theory and testing it in the field, I seek to demonstrate: (i) the centrality of Whiteness to the edifices of sexuality *as we know it*; (ii) the proximity and relationality of always-already intersected ‘race’ and gender; (iii) the particularity of the psychosocial subject’s relationship to ‘race’ and racialised experiences and objects, emphasising a dynamic unconscious, the importance of psychic processes and biography, *and* the weight of history and socio-cultural discourses and formations; and (iv) the dialectic relationship between the structures of ‘race’ and desire (among them: difference and similitude; dominance and submission; ambivalence; and insatiability), which are crucial to the ways both ‘race’ and sexuality sustain themselves.

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Introduction

"[F]rom the point of view of psychoanalysis, the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact".

Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1949/2011: 2).

"Those who are called or who consider themselves heterosexual are, in all likelihood, tall-blond-Wasposexual, short-curly-haired zaftig-Jewishosexual, African-American-with-a-southern-accentosexual, erotically excited only by members of their own ethnic group, or only by members outside that group... These choices have both cultural and individual psychological resonance".

Nancy J. Chodorow, *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond* (1994: 38).

"Most LGBT ethnic minorities say they've faced discrimination, and bigotry on dating sites is a throwback to the 50s. The LGBT community must address this".

Owen Jones, *The Guardian* (24/11/2016).

"Although contemporary sexuality and queer studies have committed themselves to a thoroughgoing analysis of racist practice, rarely do they actually succeed in this endeavor. Can work on "desire" be antiracist work? Can antiracist work think "desire"?

Sharon Patricia Holland, *The Erotic Life of Racism* (2012: 3).

I began this project in an attempt to grapple with a 'real-world' problematic, one often framed in terms of 'racial preference'. The implicit demand of users of hook-up and dating apps such as Grindr to name their erotic¹ desires - ostensibly

¹ I use "erotic" throughout this project according to an orthodox, dictionary definition, and without engaging more creative formulations (e.g. Lorde, 2017). Merriam-Webster, for example, defines erotic as "of, devoted to, or tending to arouse sexual love or desire" and "strong marked or affected by sexual desire" (Merriam-Webster, 2019). According to my own racialisation of

with a view to increasing the efficacy with which potentially sympathetic partners can be matched – has re-centred long-standing debates within gay male/MSM cultures about the racialisation of sexuality². While such debates often begin by engaging racist statements on dating profiles, they quickly open onto – and become conflated with – a myriad of discourses problematizing the racialisation of desire *tout court*. These discourses include a colour-blind (Bonilla-Silva, 2002/2010) refusal to acknowledge ‘race’ in the name of liberal hegemony, which is often combined with a superficial commitment to social cohesion³, and conversely, a racially-conscious and anti-racist politicisation of erotic desire, which formulates it as amenable to consciousness-raising and/or as an index of political commitments (Scott, 2010). In contemporary debates within the gay community (FS Magazine, 2015; BBC, 2017), the racialisation of erotic desire is most often rendered in terms of a binary of racism vs. sexual freedom. As several recent studies have demonstrated, this binary, rendered according to neo-liberal formulations of racism (the lot of aberrant “bad apples”) and sexual freedom (reduced to questions of consumerist free choice in a supposedly open market of desire) has become the primary heuristic through which racialised desires or so-called ‘racial preference’ are parsed (Callander et al. 2012, 2015; Gregorio-Smith, 2018). Remaining live to, and encouraged by, the potential for academic scholarship to contribute to life outside of the Academe, I keep this binary/debate in mind as a space within which this psychosocial investigation might make a meaningful intervention.

Aiding me in this endeavour, the quotes above act as points of orientation, and a frame for the work that follows. Putting the seemingly common sense and normative formation of heterosexuality under the weight of an imposing,

‘desire as sexuality’ framework, “erotic desire” also essentially becomes a metonym for “sexuality”.

² I delineate my ‘racialisation of desire as sexuality’ framework in detail in chapter 1, but before then, it will be useful for readers to know that I distinguish ‘desire’ and ‘sexuality’ as discrete but overlapping phenomena, and that I position them chronologically, with ‘desire’ coming first, and ‘sexuality’ second; the latter marking the point at which desire becomes racialised. Therefore, within this project, ‘desire as sexuality’ ‘sexuality’, and ‘racialised desire’ (the point at which

³ Scott brilliantly describes this as, “the usual liberal-humanist position, which – being mostly shell-mouthed on the question of sex and eroticism, anyway – habitually and insistently disavows the salience of racial difference and argues that any recognition of it taints the “purity” of “real love” or “real desire””.

Freudian question mark, the first quote asserts the inherently *radical* potential of psychoanalysis as Freud offers us a route into questioning the way *all* sexuality works; not merely those formations that err in some way from *the norm*. In the tradition of highly fruitful feminist and queer engagements with psychoanalysis (Sedgwick, 1990; Dollimore, 1991; De Lauretis, 1994; Dean, 2000), I suggest that if Freud teaches us one thing about sexuality, it is that where the erotic is concerned, there is truly *no such thing as normal*. The racialised equivalent of Freud's argument above might be to say that endogamy, in which sexual or romantic relations occur exclusively between people of the same 'race' or ethnicity, requires as much explanation as desires that cross *the Color Line*. While my own project does focus on these latter *crossings*, and while the persistence of endogamy is no doubt a function of myriad factors beyond (although nonetheless contributing to) erotic desire's racialisation, I make this introductory point in order to suggest one possible index for the scale and pervasiveness of the phenomenon.

This pervasiveness – and the ordinariness – of erotic desire's racialisation is compelling captured by Chodorow's emphasis on the "individual and psychological resonance" of our erotic choices, which neatly captures the overarching emphasis of this project's psychosocial approach. 'Race' – and the gender formations with which it intersects – signify (to the point of *overdetermination*) both culturally and individually. If we take seriously the subject's psyche – their multitudinous identifications, complex inner-object-world, and the vicissitudes of phantasy⁴ – then we must also take seriously the fact that 'race' (and gender) require us to grapple with both the cultural and the individual, the general and the particular. I nonetheless formulate the psyche as always-already psychosocial and the boundaries between social and psyche indissoluble (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008).

While advancing an implicitly psychosocial frame, Chodorow's commentary also drills down from the dominant categories of sexuality *as social identity* (hetero-

⁴ After the Kleinian convention, I refer throughout this project to "phantasy" where I mean to denote that the process is unconscious.

/homo-) to elucidate the range and depth of what such categories leave unsaid, unarticulated, and disavowed. Not least here - operating under the weight of a taboo - is the constitution of erotic desire in and through 'race'. I think this deliberate inattention to the racialised and ethnic dimensions of erotic desire can be explained in part by the fact that the wider culture in which heterosexuality operates - the "heterosexual matrix" (Butler, 1990) or "heteronormativity" (Warner, 1990) - at least in the context of Europe/the US, is itself a racialised formation, defined by intersecting dynamics of (racial) sameness and (sexual) difference that are rarely consciously apprehended. Racial difference remains the thing that stops us in our tracks and yet the great prevalence of endogamy in the context of globalisation and so-called 'multiculturalism' surely warrants greater comment⁵. Equally, in the midst of thinking about the complexities and ambivalences of transracial intimacies, it struck me how in 'mainstream' forums, rarely (or at least, insufficiently) is the focus on the challenges of relating across the gender line; rather, the strains and challenges of such relationships are almost invariably explored in the context of the psychological particularities of each of the (almost always) two subjects involved. As much as anything though, the lesson of normative heterosexuality is surely that whilst potentially productive of great joy and pleasure, trans-intimacies are by their nature difficult and ambivalent. Watching the ever-recalibrating couples on *TOWIE* or *Love Island* struggle to negotiate *gendered* sameness and difference, it strikes me how straight society accepts the necessity of crossing one of society's greatest cleavages as an unremarkable fact of life⁶. As a mainstream cultural formation, such crossings are seemingly most often rendered through iterations of the, "men are from Mars, women are from Venus" discourse; a position that eschews interrogating and problematizing gender in favour of reifying it in the course of rendering it as *natural* difference (that is, innate and complementary, and in implicit contrast - I would argue - to the *unnatural* difference and border crossings of the racial kind). In one sense then, I might even position this project

⁵ Notwithstanding the fact that the "Mixed" ethnicity category is now the fastest growing such demographic in the UK.

⁶ An observation which is not intended to elide the extensive contributions of feminists and feminist scholars on this point, not least the work of Nancy Chodorow (1978/1999; 1994), who provides one of my indicative quotes above.

in response to Gayle Rubin's call to rethink sexuality outside of the exclusive orbit of gender (1984), although in doing so, gender recurs frequently, not least in its intersections with 'race', which I configure as foundational to the identity-desire nexus on which sexuality pivots.

The final two quotes above – from Owen Jones and Sharon Holland – I read together. Jones lays out in succinct fashion the context into which my project intervenes within the gay male (or as it's framed in the quote 'LGBT') community. Jones' reference to "bigotry on dating sites" can be read narrowly as pertaining to racist statements, or, enlarged to encompass all statements of racialised erotic desire. By this latter interpretation, Jones would be articulating the discourse of a certain strand of 'progressive' opinion within the gay male (and LGBTQ+) community that to discuss 'race' in relation to sexuality is already a racist act (and one that, according to Jones, takes us 'back' to the fifties. Jones articulates this here through an implicit analogy with the infamous "No blacks, no dogs, no Irish" signs of that decade; a rhetorical flourish that also simultaneously risks exaggerating the level of progress made against racism in the intervening decades). At its least sophisticated, this discourse combines a wokeness (Badu, 2008) to the limitations of the colour-blind discourse (Bonilla-Silva, 2002/2010) while insisting that this self-same discourse frame the terms under which sexuality be spoken about (and by extension, experienced). By contrast, while calling out racist acts and modes of thought, I think our focus needs to be more on the ways in which racism and its bedfellow 'race' work *in and through* sexuality, as it is closely aligned with identity. In this project I advance my own racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' framework as a way to do so, positioning identity and desire as proximate and relational processes foundational to subjectivity. One impetus of the present project is thus an attempt at demystification and a search for a vocabulary - conceptual, affective, erotic – in which we might parse racialised sexualities without recourse to the readily-available binaristic discourse of racism vs. sexual freedom.

Nonetheless, by rejecting such neo-liberal formulations of racism and sexual freedom I am not suggesting that we shouldn't grapple with the political and

ethical dimensions of our desires and sexualities. But as a formulation of these dilemmas, I prefer one provided by Holland: “Can work on “desire” be antiracist work? Can antiracist work think “desire?” I have tried to keep these questions in my mind as an overarching rubric for this project, holding-on to both objects – erotic desire and anti-racism (and their intersection) - as psychic and political investments and passion projects. This makes for a sometimes-uneasy admixture, generating inevitable points of tension, but in the spirit of the queer, queer of color and ‘quare’ writers that have been my guides and teachers throughout this project, I attempt to work with, rather than against, these.

Perhaps a part of my aim to respond to an anti-racist agenda also stems from an uneasy sense that while tracking some of the *as-is* formations of racialised subjectivities and sexualities - the various ways these can be configured and made productive of pleasure as much as pain - this project might demonstrate insufficient concern for the profound toxicity that ‘race’ generates, and the stunning scale of its injuries. As such, I attempt to hold onto the possibilities of a *to-be*, a more utopian vision for ways of relating across boundaries, especially ‘racial’ ones. Although I feel ill-qualified to suggest what such a utopic future should look like, I remain convinced that it is only by leaning into the complexities and ambivalences, the points of tension and discomfort, that any proper reckoning and - even tentative - attempts at *reparation* can be made (what I read into Scott’s description of, “working *with* if not *through* history” [2010: 242]). At the same time I am convinced that the terrain of erotic desire and intimacy - which for all their ambivalences typically retain at least a structuring element of compassion, care, and good-will - remains a privileged one on which to seek out reparative gestures that might convince us another future is possible.

Stakes and investments

Grappling with just how 'race' intersects with erotic desire - inflects it, hacks it, produces it, polices it and engaging the lived experiences – broadly-rendered – of these phenomena is this project's ultimate *raison d'être*. As the author of this project, and as a racialised subject with racialised desires, then I am of course obliged to stake out my own implications and imbrications. My investments here are anxious and to divulge them always requires working against psychic resistances that seek to conceal them through silence and omission. For as long as I can remember, I have always been attracted to ethnic or 'racial' difference; for most of my life, this manifested in – while never becoming entirely restricted to - romantic and sexual relationships with olive-skinned, dark-featured Mediterranean men. In more recent years, and most especially following a prolonged, profound romantic relationship with a Black man, I have felt my erotic desires and sexuality manifestly orient towards Black men and Black masculinities. While my desires have never been ethnically- or 'racially' exclusive, they are profoundly inflected by both categories, while being further mediated (and partly constituted) by my own White racial identity.

Whatever the 'objective' veracity of this paranoia, I have also felt, personally, that to write about these topics from this position – and to pursue my erotic desires - is to operate under the weight of a cloud of suspicion. "Why are you, a White man, attracted to Black men?" "You *must* be *objectifying, instrumentalising, fetishizing...*" "You must be a racist!" This persecution arrives on two sides, since the discourse of "race-traitor" retains a latent charge, even while I feel it exerts little conscious hold. To write from this position and articulate such a constellation of anxieties speaks to the ongoing liveness of the legacies of our Imperial pasts, and perhaps also to the lack of available discursive resources for tarrying with love and sexualities that cross *the Color Line*; most especially perhaps when this involves "loving blackness" (hooks, 1992).

I would also emphasise the difference in the realm of erotic desire between finding something or someone attractive and wanting to have sex with them; in point of fact, there is often a wide gulf between the two. As an example of this, I have repeatedly seen accusations of internalised racism levelled at Black people

whose erotic and romantic desires are oriented to non-Black people. This might be framed along the lines of, “Imagine not finding Black people attractive”. Such statements intervene in a highly defended, prickly terrain replete with histories of racialised injury. For instance, the discourse that prominent and successful Black men (particularly in the United States) eschew Black women to partner with White women circulates in a context in which White supremacist beauty standards have long dominated mainstream cultural representations, and Black bodies were so denigrated that “black is beautiful” became a central pedagogic element of movements for Black power and ‘racial’ justice (again, hooks essay on *Loving Blackness* [1992] is pertinent here). And yet, this context being given, I would suggest there is actually nothing to indicate that a given Black subject who predominantly or even exclusively partners with people who are not Black cannot still find Black people or Blackness attractive; just like most gay men can (presumably) find women attractive without wanting to have sex with them. What gets the blood flowing to our nether regions is not an index of our political commitments *or* of the *totality* of our identifications. This project proceeds from the position that while we are obliged to unpick the imbrication of our desire in structures of power, we should nonetheless refrain from prescriptive solutions for how anyone should be living their life. In this, I position the project in the difficult, potentially contradictory space opened up by Warner, in his book *The Trouble with Normal*, where he argues that while we *do* need an ethics of sex, this *does not* mean having a theory about what people’s desires should and should not be (2000: 35). The inefficacy of any prescriptive approach is in any case underlined by Foucault’s (1978/1998) argument that attempts to ban and regulate erotic desires merely amplifies their charge; a logic that seems especially pertinent to the historical regulation of transracial intimacies. While keeping in play the vital political and ethical questions they throw up, I want to suggest that sexuality should not be configured as a terrain on which it is intellectually or affectively possible to take the moral high ground.

Overview of chapters

Book-ended by this introduction and a concluding discussion, this project is comprised of five chapters. In chapter 1, I review the literature around the racialisation of sexuality, largely privileging work focused on MSM and LGBTQ+ communities, and providing an overview of the diverse critical perspectives through which these topics have been parsed to date. In chapter 2, in what I call a “theoretical intervention”, I trace an expansive account of the racialisation of ‘desire as sexuality’ as I came to generate it through engagement with critical theories of sexuality and ‘race’. This work is the route by which I arrived at the high-level synopsis of the ‘RoDaS’ framework I provide at the beginning of chapter 3, and I include it here as an expansive (psychosocial-) psychoanalytic account of that framework, which also provides evidence of my theoretical ‘workings out’. Chapter 3 begins with a neater and more explicit delineation of this work - the ‘RoDaS framework’ - which in turn forms the basis of the theoretically-driven empirical methodologies I apply in chapters 4 and 5. Here, as in chapter 2, I draw on racial formation theory, psychic and phenomenological theories of ‘race’, and critical race theories, in order to think through the ways that ‘race’ comes into being; to limn the symbiosis that lies at the nexus of ‘race’ and sexuality; and to establish the ontological and epistemological foundations for the ways I seek track ‘race’ and racialised sexualities across my field sites. In the remainder of chapter 3, I map out the methodologies I used for my fieldwork on Grindr and in the research interviews, elaborating the ontological and epistemological dimensions of the psychosocial subject I posit throughout this work. I also reflexively consider my own investments in this project in further detail, thinking about how these shaped the production of knowledge. Throughout this chapter, I attempt to keep in mind the ethical dimensions of my empirical enquiries, a key challenge given the potential *loadedness* and sensitivity of the material, and the inherent high stakes of work that engages live participants. Moving on to my fieldwork, in chapter 4, I interrogate the gay male/MSM hook-up and dating app Grindr as an “infrastructure of intimacy” (Race, 2015a), and a site of sociality where racialised sexualities are co-constructed and sustained. Taking the Grindr profile as a privileged site of sexual subjectivity, I conduct a theoretically-driven thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2008) of 100 Grindr profiles. I engage the RoDaS framework’s emphasis on

historicity, subjective (psychic, corporeal) mediation, and bypassing intentionality in favour of a focus on *effects*, in order to facilitate the thematic analysis of profiles. In chapter 5, I analyse biographical narrative interviews that I conducted with White and Black MSM who self-identified as having a 'racial preference' in sex and dating. Framing these interviews as 'staged snapshots of subjectivity', I analyse the transcripts through the RoDaS framework's formulation of sexuality as a subjectively-mediated racial formation (Omi & Winant, 1986/2014), attending to racialised discourses, identifications, and other psychic processes in the context of the participants' wider biographies. I conclude the project with a discussion of the utility, fruitfulness, and limitations of the 'RoDaS' framework – as I've applied it – reflecting on key findings and possible future avenues and angles of research.

Some notes on language

As an extended *nota bene*, I conclude this introduction with a discussion of my use of some key language and terminology throughout the project.

Writing about 'race' – Throughout the project I have chosen to capitalise 'Black' and 'White', after traditions in Black studies and Whiteness studies respectively. While there is something about the capitalisation of White that seems to perform violence every time I type it - almost as though it is capitalising itself in the very name of the White supremacy I am trying to interrogate and deconstruct - I do so in order to make the word as conspicuous as possible (responding to the fact that Whiteness has too often been defined by its slipperiness and invisibility [Morrisson, 1992; Winddance Twine & Gallagher, 2008]).

I put 'race' (and thereby 'racial') in quote marks throughout the project in the tradition of social constructionist approaches to 'race', to acknowledge that while I am grappling here with the very real material consequences of 'race' in and through desire (*as sexuality*); racial difference is, at its root, a massive fabrication. The quotations are therefore meant to dislodge 'race' as an already-established ontology.

Writing about sexuality – I use ‘gay’, and more often (and more accurately) ‘gay male’ - as a terminology throughout this project, despite also wanting to problematise this identity category (see End Note 1). While ‘gay’ may not exist ‘organically’, it certainly has a cultural, psychic, and phenomenological life, which is rich and meaningful to many people. In much the same way as calling ‘race’ a social construct does nothing to negate its material effects – nor the phenomenological experience of being racialised – so ‘gay’ has a life, however much I might want to problematise it as an aspect of the social organisation and regulation of sexuality. As such, I want at this stage to draw a distinction between my objections to the category and my frequent invocation of it throughout what follows. I also frequently use the acronym ‘MSM’ – men-who-have-sex-with-men – which I borrow from sexual health, a sector in which I have worked for many years. I find this behavioural descriptor refreshingly broad and free of the weight of representations that so easily attach to social identities.

In much the same way as for ‘gay’, when throughout this project, I use the term ‘gay community’, I do not mean to convey a belief in the idea of a cohesive or monolithic entity operating according to communitarian principles of solidarity and social support. Rather I wish to denote two things: the first is the idea of a particular mainstream formation, originating in gay liberation politics but by now largely detached from this anchoring, which manifests primarily in patterns of consumption, whether in the form of popular culture, lifestyle goods, or commercialised spaces like bars and clubs, largely sustained by the profit motive (Duggan, 2003). I also wish to denote that despite this contention that there is no monolithic ‘gay community’, the *idea* of such a community nonetheless and importantly endures as what Callander et al. (2018) formulate as, “a social construct with an enduring currency and symbolism in the Western world” (2018: 7). In short, I use the term to denote this *idea* of community (one that also represents an important site of disidentification [Muñoz, 1999]) for many gay male and queer subjects, including myself), even while I wish to denaturalise and problematize the ways it is often deployed in the everyday of LGBTQ+ lives. Again, to move away from identities to behavioural descriptors and to better

capture, for instance, the range of groups frequenting Grindr and other sites of male same-sexuality, I occasionally refer to 'MSM' communities (which after Warner [2002] might be better formulated as MSM "publics"). While I refer periodically to the 'LGBTQ+ community', this is a broader formation than I am seeking to invoke in most of the contexts in which I explore racialised sexualities throughout this project, but it nonetheless works as more or less tangible umbrella identity and community, intersecting with the 'gay male' one.

Chapter 1 ~ Racialised sexualities in gay men's communities: reviewing the literature

I begin this psychosocial investigation by reviewing work from a range of disciplines that grapples with the racialisation of sexuality in gay male/MSM contexts, both off- and online. I start by delineating a particular context for the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' within this project, examining the racialised aspects of gay male identity, community, and culture. I explore work that limns the Whiteness of gay male identity alongside approaches that parse this racialisation in a broader historic and geopolitical context. Shifting the focus to the content of racialised sexualities, I examine the racialised hierarchies of 'desire *as* sexuality' perpetuated within gay/MSM sexual fields, including the racialised sexual stereotypes and scripts that flesh out the form and content of these hierarchies (which reappear in this project across the Grindr profiles analysed in chapter 4). I then move onto work that formulates queers of colour as subjects - and not merely objects - of desire. This work also centres the myriad ways in which MSM of colour negotiate their intersectional identities (Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2016), leaning into and/or untangling numerous points of tension along the way. I privilege the 'queer of color' theory of "disidentification" (Muñoz, 1999) as a way of reading the experiences of queers of colour, providing a psychosocial formulation of identification on which I draw throughout this project. Looking to life beyond the instrumentalised hook-up, I then explore work on 'transracial' intimacies as a way of leaning into their ambivalences, pleasures, and potential perils: an area to which my interviews in chapter 5 contribute. Finally, I take up the implications of different frameworks that position racialised desires and sexuality variously as "racial preference" (Crockett, 2010, 2016), "sexual racism" (Robinson & Frost, 2018; Callander et al. 2016), and "the racialisation of desire" (Daroya, 2013; Husbands et al., 2013). Each of these formulations has significant implications for the way that 'race', racism, and racialised desires can be thought about and lived. After delineating what I see as the limitations of these approaches, I conclude with a discussion of the ways I hope this project can contribute to weaknesses and gaps in the existing work on racialised sexuality.

White Gay Racism

A longstanding body of artistic, activist and scholarly work interrogates 'race' and racism across queer communities and identities (Beam, 1986; Mercer & Julien, 1988; Riggs, 1989; Hemphill, 1991/2007; Bérubé, 2001; Walcott, 2003; Barnard, 2004; Nero, 2005; Riggs, 2018). The last few years has seen these issues afforded renewed prominence, with "racism in the gay community" having been the focus of special issues of gay male periodicals (FS Magazine, 2015), national newspaper opinion columns (Jones, 2016), and BBC documentaries (*Queer Britain*, BBC, 2017). I suggest that two possible explanations for this renewed prominence are the increasing ubiquity of perspectives challenging hegemonic "colour-blind" 'race' ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2002/2010) – a hegemony that has promoted the idea that not seeing 'race' is politically desirable and expedient – and the rise of hook-up apps such as Grindr, on which 'race' and racism very quickly emerged as prominent sites of user experience and public contestation (McGlotten, 2013; "douchebagsofgrindr", 2019). As I will go on to argue though, in matters of sexuality, the re-centring of 'race' remains only partial, contested, and subject to discourses that construct it in very particular ways, which I suggest fail to capture the pleasures, perils, and complexities of its lived experience.

Within the work by queer artists, activists and scholars cited above – which is almost-invariably elided in contemporary mainstream treatments of 'race' in gay male contexts - one of the most prominent and effective lines of enquiry has been the problematisation of gay male culture, community, and identity as a White supremacist formation. While gay male identity was founded as a resistant, 'liberatory' response to the pathologising discourses circulating around the category "homosexual" (with its roots in the sciences of sexology, psychiatry, and institutional psychoanalysis [Dean & Lane, 2000]), it has historically failed to formulate this liberatory resistance in intersectional terms. Instead it pivots on a single dimension of 'othering' – sexual non-normativity – thus privileging the interests of the affluent, White gay male for whom this sexual non-normativity is their sole marker of difference. And while gay liberation politics was effective in building a counter-discourse to the medical models of homosexuality, it was unable shake off its roots in a particular Western epistemology of sexual

subjectivities, which positioned sex and sexuality as ontological questions concerned with subjects' very being⁷. In this way, sexual behaviours were no longer merely incidental, but the grounds for identities. As a consequence of this particular history, Riggs has argued that, "white ontologies do not capture diverse ways of understanding gender and sexuality" (Riggs, 2018: 139). Riggs builds on the work of Greg Thomas (2007) who eloquently excoriates 'mainstream' queer theory⁸ both for its Eurocentric cultural-historical frame (all those endless allusions to Hellenic boy love), and for having largely reproduced a hierarchy of differences in which sexuality is still *the* privileged marker of subjectivity, even as the homo/hetero binary is critiqued in favour of more fluid formulations of gender and sexuality. Thomas suggests that this has had particularly adverse consequences for queers of colour, who are expected to subsume their racial and ethnic identities to a purportedly radical politics of fluidity, which eschews identity altogether. As Harris formulates it in her prominent intervention *Black Queer Feminism*, "This fluidity sounds dangerously like the status of white masculinity to me" (1996: 15). In other words, in a society so saturated with 'race', it is a marker of White MSM's racial privilege that they can choose not to name and grapple with their 'race' and 'racial' identities. With this in mind, in this project I seek to re-centre White MSM's racial identities with the ultimate aim of de-centring Whiteness in turn. This 're-centring to decentre' must explicitly guard against the potential for more White

⁷ Gay liberation movements also adopted a Western formulation of freedom, and sex as a privileged site at which such freedom could be exercised. This embrace of gay as an ontology and site of liberation also runs counter to the prominent contemporary work of queer French philosopher Foucault, perhaps explaining his ambivalent relationship to the gay liberation movement (Halperin, 1995/1997).

⁸ It should also be noted here that the queer theory that I have chosen to call 'mainstream', and the target of Thomas' critique, is a largely-white authored canon of texts, which has been challenged by at least two bodies of work I explore in more depth below, namely, black queer studies (Harper, 2000; Johnson, 2000; McBride, 2000, 2005; Ross, 2000; Walcott, 2000, 2003, 2006) and queer of colour analysis (Muñoz, 1999, 2009; Eng, 2001, 2010; Ferguson, 2003; Gopinath, 2005; Puar, 2007; Reddy, 2011 [I further note that several of the latter authors may also be categorized under the rubric of *decolonial queer theory* (Bakshi, Jivraj & Posocco [2016]; Gomes Pereira [2019])). It is interesting to note the degree to which this dynamic reproduces the 'racial' politics of White 'gay' identity: an unqualified, canonical "queer theory", whose authors and cultural references are overwhelming White, challenged and contested by movements that seek to re-centre 'race' and other dimensions of difference and marginalisation. This is especially damning, given that queer theory originates in part as an explicit challenge to the normalizing, assimilationist impulses of gay and lesbian identities.

solipsism and focus instead on promoting racial (self-) consciousness as a way of apprehending the world and the subject's (privileged) place within it.

John D'Emilio's (1983) now classic paper on the emergence of homosexual identities as a product of industrial capitalism provides another historic reading of the White racialisation of gay identity. D'Emilio argues that the disruption of intergenerational kinship ties and the concentration of young, free, and single wage labourers in urban centres, both brought about by industrial capitalism, provided the context in which same-sex activity could become clustered, *communitised*, and then reified into an identity category. Given that the quintessential beneficiary of this new wage labour model was White, it is perhaps unsurprising that gay identities, communities, and participants have reflected these racialised origins. Rendering White gay identity in these terms also responds to the model provided by Ferguson (2003) in his intersectional analyses of sexual subject formations, which configures 'race', class, gender and sexuality in an indissoluble nexus.

Gay's Whiteness has been inherent to representations of gay life, from television and film (*Will & Grace*, *Queer As Folk*, and nearly all of the 'New Queer Cinema' [Muñoz, 1998]), to adverts for consumer lifestyle products and public health campaigns (Han, 2008). Reflecting and reinforcing this Whiteness, a number of empirical studies have found that MSM of colour are less likely than White men to self-label as gay (for studies exploring African American men's sexual self-definition see Green [2007]; Robinson [2008]; Bowleg [2013]; for a study of Black Canadian men, see Giwa [2018]. Das Nair & Thomas [2012] found the same trend amongst South Asian MSM living in the English midlands). While this can be configured as an *effect* both of 'gay's' inherent Whiteness, and of the particular complexities of MSM of colour's intersectional identities, it nonetheless has the effect of symbiotically facilitating the restriction and retention of gay identity as a tacit (economic, social, and cultural) property of White men. Furthermore, I suggest that this context facilitates the enduring – if implicit – formulation of the default gay male desiring subject as by-definition White.

Colonial politics, colonial desires: *homonationalism* and *gay Orientalism*

If 'gay' identity has historically been formulated as implicitly White, Jacks Cheng argues that it is epistemologically buttressed by what he calls, "Gay Orientalism" (Cheng, 2018). Building on Said's formulation of Orientalism (1978/2003) as a representational rubric of White supremacy and Oriental abjection – one fundamental to the project of European colonialism - Cheng argues that gay White men use the figure of the racialised Other as, "a surrogate to establish and empower their own strength and identity" (2018: 35). The Other thus becomes a repository for White gay men's psychic projections and anxieties. Alan Han (2007) argues that in the context of a gay culture in which masculinity is prized and gay men arrive always-already emasculated, White gay men project their gendered anxieties onto Asian men, who become the properly effeminate, emasculated Other- the *real* sissy. Thinking about how this representational context shapes sexuality, Collins (2009) evokes an especially rich site of contemporary gay Orientalism in her in-depth interview study of White gay immigrants in Manila. Collins found that many of her research subjects moved to the Philippines to pursue their desire for younger local men, who were often framed in exotic, *Orientalising* terms; once there, they drew on their Whiteness and wealth to market themselves, and in the process established a renewed colonial relation with their objects of desire.

Crucially, as Said noted in his original formulation of *Orientalism*, the racialised Other can never properly assimilate. Instead, attempts at assimilation render the non-European Other as "repetitious pseudo-incarnations of some great original (Christ, Europe, the West [and of course, we might now add to this list of Occidental totems, "Gay"])" they were supposed to be imitating" (Said, 1978: 62). In other words, MSM of colour become, in the words of Fatima El-Tayeb, "Gays who cannot properly be gay" (El-Tayeb, 2012). El-Tayeb's work also recalls Homi Bhabha's formulation of colonial mimicry, an inherently ambivalent process by which the colonial subject becomes "almost the same, *but not quite*" (1994: 85), "*almost the same but not white*" (1994: 89) (italics in original). Besides the maintenance and regulation of 'gay' as a White identity, the dynamic Bhabha

delineates strikes me as a fruitful lens through which to parse a range of contemporary phenomena, including and not limited to: the positioning of former colonies as backward on account of laws and cultures of homophobia exported by the newly-Enlightened (and quick to forget) colonial powers; and a juridical regime for sexuality-based refugee claims in which between 2016 and 2018, 3,100 asylum claims from nationals of countries in which same-sex acts are outlawed (Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria being the top three countries of origin) were rejected by the U.K government, with the judge in one recent case having rejected a claim because the claimant did not have a gay “demeanour” (Bruce-Jones, 2015; Guardian, 2019).

Alongside an investment in Orientalist cultural representations, a contemporary geo-politics of gay Orientalism has also emerged, promoted by LGBTQ+ civic organisations and Western governments alike. Taking aim at “the universalized “gay” identity imagined within a Eurocentric gay imaginary”, Gayatri Gopinath singles out “gay and lesbian transnational politics” for their strategic recirculation of “constructions of Third World sexualities as anterior, premodern, and in need of Western political development” (2005: 12). Within this neo-colonialist discourse, the West once again emerges as universal beacon of progress, while the “the rest” reassume their position as benchmarks of backwardness. The material effects for non-Western queers (and at times, for minority-racialised subjects in Western countries) is to position them as inevitable victims, invoking psychosocial processes of splitting and projection to displace legitimate concerns about racism in LGBTQ+ communities onto sexual intolerance and homophobia ‘out there’ (Robinson, 2008; Han, 2008).

Jasbir Puar coined the term “homonationalism” to describe a particular formation of LGBT⁹ politics in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks in the US (Puar, 2007). Puar notes how LGBT civic organisations have collaborated in the positioning of progressive attitudes to sexuality as a hallmark of Western modernity, occluding highly contested struggles for LGBT rights in the very recent past. What might be termed a form of strategic diversity (or “pink

⁹ I use the more limited acronym ‘LGBT’ instead of ‘LGBTQ+’ here deliberately.

washing”) has in turn been adopted in the U.K. by fascist groups including the English Defence League, who deploy LGBTQ+ rights as a cornerstone of an ahistoricised, implicitly-racialised English national culture to which Muslims are positioned as always-already at odds. Robinson (2016) carries with another instance of the racial politics of homonormativity, this time in California, in the debate around the anti-gay marriage referendum, “Prop 8”. Robinson argues that this vote (in 2008), in which significant portions of the state’s African American community were perceived to have come out in favour of ‘traditional’ models of marriage, generated, “a fissure between the black community and the gay community” (2016: 1010). Robinson takes up this contested terrain as a site at which to analyse the positioning and representation of (Black) ‘race’ in the gay community, noting for example that, “Although the [gay] marriage equality movement billed itself as a descendant of the black civil rights movement, it often treats its forefather as dead”, contributing in turn to the dangerous logic of “postracialism”. Another result of this erasure Robinson argues, is “gays supplanting blacks as the paradigmatic stigmatized minority”, leading LGBT periodical *The Advocate* to announce, “Gay Is the New Black” (2016: 1010). The willingness of some sections of the gay community to court this “paradigmatic stigmatized minority” moniker speaks to a desire to reap the rewards of minority status without acknowledging the racial, gender and class privileges of many of the subjects concerned, or the urgent need for a politics of intersectional solidarity.

The racial politics of the White gay community and the colonial politics of gay Orientalism contribute significantly to the context in which debates about so-called ‘racial preference’ and racialised sexualities unfold. Beyond this debate, they provide tropes, scripts and other representations that are not merely *incidental to*, but rather *constitutive of* those racialised desires and identities, and the racialised identifications on which these are predicated. The ways that ‘race’ inflects erotic desire and becomes inflected by it in turn cannot be divorced from this wider material context. In grappling with what I go on to frame as the racialisation of ‘desire as sexuality’, I argue that we need to keep in mind the ways ‘race’ and ethnicity saturate LGBTQ+ communities, cultures, and the

always-already racialised subjects that negotiate them (a particular example of the past living through the present that I explore in-depth in chapter 4).

A racialised hierarchy of erotic desire

One significant way in which the Whiteness of gay identity and mainstream gay communities becomes manifest is via what Paul et al. (2010) call a “tacit race/ethnicity-based sexual hierarchy” wherein White men are most desirable – the ‘racial’ *type* that it’s presumed everyone will be in to – followed by Latinos and African Americans, with Asian and Pacific Islander men the least ‘preferred’ for sex and romantic relationships. This hierarchy repeated itself in identical order across numerous empirical studies, which employed quantitative techniques to analyse aggregated ‘racial preferences’ across sex-seeking and dating profiles (Phua & Kaufman, 2003; Robinson, 2008, & 2015; Paul et al., 2010; Lick & Johnson, 2015; Rafalow et al. 2017). Phau & Kaufman found that gay men were also nearly five times as likely as straight men to state that they would only date other Whites. Poon & Ho (2008) argue that in this context, bodies of colour become judged in terms of deficiency against a normative White benchmark.

Several studies (Green 2007; Daroya 2013, 2018; Han, 2018) explicitly pick up Green’s formulation of gay male communities as “sexual fields” (2008b) as a way to explain the dominance of Whiteness in the hierarchy of racialised sexuality. Arguing that “modern urban life is increasingly characterised by specialized erotic worlds” (2008b: 25), Green defines a sexual field – after Bourdieu (1984/2010) – as “a particular *kind* of social organization”, the features of which include, “the formation of sexual status structures, (and) the social settings in which these structures arise and are transformed” (26). A sexual field structures the erotic standards that cut across the spatial nodes (such as bars, apps, and cruising sites) at which sexuality plays out. Crucially, sexual fields become objects of identification, and benchmarks that inflect and generate sexuality. Thus the effect of a sexual field on a sexual actor within it can be described as dialectical. Green argues that subjects negotiate sexual fields based on a “field

position" (2008b, 40), which is dictated by a given sexual subject's "erotic capital", defined here as, "the quality and quantity of attributes that an individual possesses, which elicit an erotic response in another" (2008b, 25). Based on his empirical work in gay male communities, Green argues that 'race' and gender top the list of attributes contributing to a given subject's erotic capital. While Green suggests that sexual fields are influenced by the wider culture, he also sees them as micro-sites at which wider social norms can be inflected, upended or reworked to create new objects of desire, and cites the "clone culture" and leather scenes that emerged after the gay liberation movement in the United States as examples of the particularity of sexual fields within gay male contexts. In this sense, gay male cultures host multiple social fields concurrently, although Han & Kyung-Hee argue that, "race is a consistent gauge of desirability that spans across diverse sexual fields" (2018: 145). More specifically, Daroya argues that, "On Grindr and online websites and platforms, Whiteness can be perceived as the most valuable erotic capital" (2018: 68). In Das Nair & Thomas' interviews with South Asian men in the English Midlands, the authors found that most participants sought out White partners for sex and dating. The authors comment, "White people desire other White people, and Asian MSM also desire White people. It is unclear whether for Asian MSM this represents desire for the White body per se, or the opportunities coupling with a White man affords" (2012: 6). In fact, I would suggest this distinction between White men and what they represent is unsustainable, as the White gay male body becomes inextricable from the opportunities it signifies (a dynamic that I suggest may be coming to the fore in my case study on Trevor in chapter 5). As Cheng (2018) argues, because the default gay subject is White, for some MSM of colour, partnering with a White man may shore-up their own sense of gay identity and denote a sense of fuller participation in gay male communities.

Das Nair & Thomas' findings with South Asian MSM mirror those of quantitative and qualitative researchers who have worked on the racialised sexual and dating preferences of South East and East Asian MSM (Phua & Kaufman, 2003; Han, 2007; Poon & Ho, 2008; Daroya, 2013; Tsunokai et al., 2014). A particular terminology patronisingly positions Asian MSM who partner with White men,

and White men who partner with Asian men, as “potato queens” and “rice queens” respectively (Daroya, 2013). As “rice queens” are typically stereotyped as being old and out-of-shape, Han (2007) notes that even when Asian men are desired by White men, gay male culture provides a way to denigrate both groups as always-already undesirable anyway¹⁰.

Racialised stereotypes and scripts

The positioning of Whiteness at the top of a racialised hierarchy of erotic desire occurs alongside – and is inflected by – the positioning of non-White men in particular ways, *in relation to* Whiteness, through racialised sexual stereotypes and scripts. These historically anchored, White sexual scripts circumscribe the ways MSM of colour are encouraged to experience their sexuality. And just as it is White (normative) masculinity, and not merely Whiteness, that sits atop the gay male hierarchy of desire, so ‘desirable’ racial formations come always-already mediated by gender. Black men are positioned as more ‘masculine’ than a default White subject and accordingly encouraged to assume the “top” role in penetrative sex (Teunis, 2007; Green, 2007; Husbands et al., 2013). When they are configured in sexual terms at all, Asian men, particularly East and South East Asian men, are positioned as emasculated and effeminate, encouraged to demonstrate this through the assumption of the bottom role (Han, 2007; Daroya, 2013, 2018).

Racialised sexual stereotypes and scripts have a history and must therefore be contextualised in the *longue durée* of colonialism. They may thus endure as examples of what Walcott calls (after Derrida) “hauntology (2003). Walcott’s use of “hauntology” describes a present haunted by contemporary reformulations of racist and racialising discourses, constructions, and formations that the dominant liberal conception of history seeks to relegate to the past. Yet the lines between past and present are significantly more blurred when we unpack present-day representations to examine the often-contradictory images they

¹⁰ And we might also note that this example introduces another register of hierarchical ordering on which erotic desire and capital can pivot- namely age.

concurrently contain. For instance, while the sexualities of both Black men and women have historically been configured in animalistic terms (Hill-Collins, 2006: 100), and despite the frequent framing of Black masculinity as 'hypermasculinity' within the Grindr profiles and research interviews analysed later in this project; Black men have not traditionally been positioned as manifesting a surfeit of masculinity, but rather the opposite, as *emasculated* (hooks, 1992; Hill-Collins, 2006; Walcott, 2006). Under systems of racial capitalism (Robinson, 2019) and histories of colonialism and chattel slavery, Black men have often experienced economic marginalisation and the rape and exploitation of themselves and Black women. Consequently, as bell hooks notes, "the discourse of black resistance has almost always equated manhood with freedom, the economic and material domination of black men with castration and emasculation" (1992: 58). Furthermore, the cultural and material marginalisation of Black men both inflects and is *constitutive of* the sexual appeal of the Black male archetype, both in an out of gay male contexts. As a typically eloquent Darieck Scott puts it: in the sexual arena, the Black male's "degraded status and potential power... are inextricable from one another", resulting in what he calls "a kind of erection-castration paradox" (2014: 185).

Conversely, as Cheng (2018) notes, the contemporary "racially castrated" (Eng, 2001) Asian male is part of a narrative of domestication and assimilation designed to deny Asian men agency and drain and reconfigure what had previously been the standard depiction of Asian men as a sexual threat (for evidence of which see nineteenth century anti-miscegenation laws targeted at Chinese and Japanese men that were passed in several US states [Lowe, 2006]). Thus, Asian men experience their own "erection-castration paradox" as the attribution of economic success has been accompanied by a repositioning of Asian masculinity as sexually undesirable. Seemingly then, it's (once again) only White men who can have it all. As Lowe (2006) notes, the relationship of Whites to Black and Asian people must also be seen in terms of the mutational endurance of a colonial narrative that positioned humanity in a hierarchy of

Whites at the top, Blacks at the bottom and Asians as a bulwark in between¹¹. In historicising racialised sexual stereotypes of Black and Asian men, I believe we can begin to see the outline itself of sexuality as an historic formation; something I attempt to track in my analysis of Grindr profiles in chapter 4.

Beyond attending to what racialised stereotypes and scripts say, we must also attend to what they *do* (that is, to what uses they are put) for (/by) those who propagate and pursue them. Wilson et al. (2009) allude to this when they note that participants in their study described deriving erotic (psychic and sensual) pleasure from performing racialised sexual stereotypes in concert with other racialised subjects. This finding suggests that the dominant cultural intelligibility of racialised sexual scripts, and the re-production of dominant racialised ways of seeing and knowing, may carry their own erotic charge and potential for pleasure. Such dynamics also highlight the relationality of (desire *as*) sexuality and the identities around which they pivot; reminds us that when it comes to 'race' and gender, it takes two to tango¹². It also further amplifies the pedagogic and somatic potency of porn, a mass-consumed (however surreptitiously) art form that continues to reproduce colonially anchored scripts as common-sense ways of apprehending the present. Stereotypes may also provide subjects with a sense of mastery and control, generating what Kobena Mercer formulates as, "a fixed way of seeing that freezes the flux of experience" (1987: 436). Such flux might be thought of as variously intimidating, anxiety-inducing, and overwhelming, to which stereotypes and scripts offer by way of a salve the momentary triumph of command over the world. Stereotypes are epistemologically anchored to the terrain of the empirical, freighted with an anxious sense of their own self-evidence, and herein also lie the roots of their ambivalence and insatiable need for repetition. Bhabha (1984) identifies "ambivalence" and "fixity" as foundational to the structure of the colonial stereotype, arguing that; "the stereotype...is a form of knowledge and

¹¹ Sometimes literally, as in the example Lowe gives [2006] of the "Trinidad Experiment" when Chinese workers were relocated to Trinidad by colonial authorities as "a racial barrier" between the White British and newly freed Black slaves.

¹² A formulation that recalls De Lauretis' recurring maxim that "it takes two women to make a lesbian" (1994).

identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must always be repeated... as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never, in discourse, be proved" (1984: 18). Drawing on this formulation then, we might configure sexual subjects' attachment to (racialised) stereotypes as attempts to assuage anxiety by asserting a sense of mastery over an always-in-flux, ultimately unknowable world- a compulsion to repeat, to reaffirm, to master.

Recalling Han's point above (2007) and given the content of some of the racialised sexual stereotypes discussed here, the 'benefits' of racialised sexual scripts to White MSM might also lie in the realm of their gender anxieties. Since gay men's masculinity often operates under the shadow of an emasculating question mark – something Black men and gay men share in common, implying a double emasculation for the Black, gay male – I believe we need to consider the ways that 'interracial' erotic scripts can facilitate White gay men's acting out and shoring up - through erotic play - of their own masculinist anxieties. These anxieties are heightened by gay male culture's paradigmatic 'masc4masc' gender dynamic, in which traditional totems of masculinity are feted, and where in order *to have* masculinity you also need *to be* it. Configuring gender as relational (Butler, 2004) and thinking at a strictly social level; the erotic script of the White man playing top, 'taking' the 'effeminate Asian' male, secures the White man's masculinity, as bedroom dominance evokes the figure of the colonial plunderer. In supposedly 'submitting' to the Black man in the Black top-White bottom sexual script the White man is afforded the opportunity to forgo his masculinity for the sake of a momentary erotic *jouissance* that does nothing to upend the social and economic power structures which ensure that, once the sex is over, neo-colonial order will be restored and the White man returned to a position of dominance. Shifting to a (psychoanalytic) psychosocial register: on the basis of the oscillatory quality of identification and the potential it provides for being in two places at once, the encounters described above also provide a way *to be* the racialised, gendered Other; in this instance facilitating the White man's borrowing the Black man's purported hyper-masculinity, while the partner of a supposedly emasculated Asian man can momentarily occupy his position of

racialised, gendered abjection. Amidst all the opportunities for psychic play that identification and phantasy afford, it is important to note that the stakes of such psychic experimentation are racialised; the outside world is racist, misogynist and masculinist, and 'transracial' identifications do nothing *ipso facto* to change these material realities.

For men of colour, racialised sexual stereotypes constitute instruments of regulation and sites of resistance, but they also offer ways of achieving recognition and desirability in the "gay marketplace of desire" (Daroya, 2018), generating points of *disidentification*; a form of mediated, ambivalent identification that can also be highly pleasurable (Muñoz, 1999 – I explore this concept in depth below). Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer's description of their ambivalent relationship to the representations of Black men in gay male culture could be read fruitfully through this latter lens; "While we recognize the oppressive dimension of these images of black men as Other, we are also attracted: We want to look but don't always find the images we want to see. This ambivalent mixture of attraction and repulsion goes for black gay men in porn generally, but the inscribed or preferred meaning of the images are not fixed; they can at times, be prised apart into alternative readings when different experiences are brought to bear on their interpretations" (1991/2007: 209-210). Such an ambivalent identification might provide scope both for holding onto the ways that power works through discourses to produce pleasure *and* identifying the limits of, and lacunae within, dominant discourses ("Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" [Foucault, 1976/1998: 101]); spaces within which sexual subjects – especially multiply-marginalised ones like queers of colour – might find a space for themselves.

Resistance, agency, and *disidentification*

A (relatively small and insufficient) number of contemporary social scientific studies engage the lived experiences of MSM of colour, highlighting research subjects' responses to the racialised hierarchy of White gay male desire, and

racism in gay communities (while also positioning MSM of colour as subjects of desire themselves). This is framed variously in terms of “agency”, “resistance”, and “stigma-management”. Here, I bring examples of this work into conversation with a particular, psychosocial formulation of identification; namely José Esteban Muñoz’ concept of “disidentification”, which I frame, after its author, as a form of (psychosocial) resistance that is explicitly anchored to the lived experiences of queers of colour. I delineate the concept at length here because: (1) I think it enhances readings of the empirical studies under review; (2) I continue to draw on disidentification as a type of identification through this project; and (3) it’s an opportunity for me to luxuriate for a moment – unapologetically – in the lushness of Muñoz’ work.

Here, I offer a brief definition of ‘identification’ (before going on to explore this in much greater detail in chapter 3) in order to establish precisely what it is that Muñoz is *queer of colour-ing*. According to the classic psychoanalytic dictionary – *The Language of Psychoanalysis* – ‘identification’ is a, “psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973/2006: 205). Thus, identification involves the subject’s internalisation of the other, including the social interpellations that constitute the other’s subjectivity, providing a roadmap of psychic investments and object cathexes through which the subject constructs a self and negotiates the world. While identification is classically positioned within psychoanalysis as discrete from – and in opposition to – desire (a move which by psychoanalysis’ own terms acts as a way to repress or disavow unwanted and/or prohibited desires), in *Disidentifications* (1999), Muñoz draws on queer re-formulations of identification (e.g. Sedgwick, 1990; Fuss, 1995; Butler, 1997) that collapse this distinction, rendering identification fundamental to both the subject’s identity *and* their erotic desires and sexuality. While disidentification would traditionally mean a negative identification, as for instance, the process by which a White racist disidentifies with people of colour as a means of constructing their own identity (“I am not them; I am what they are not” – note here the intense psychic investment and the degree to which people of colour become foundational to the

racist's sense of self [Yancy, 2018]), Muñoz nuances this definition to render disidentification as essentially a type of mediated, or qualified, identification. In doing so he seeks specifically to capture the relationship of queer people of colour to dominant and sub- cultural forms, and the lived experiences of such subjects, negotiating a world that is structurally stacked against them. Essentially a re-rendering of psychoanalytic theory via the subject constructions and lived experiences of queers of colour, I take Muñoz' formulation of disidentification to be inherently psychosocial. Through the first chapter of the book, Muñoz provides no fewer than ten distinct, if overlapping, conceptualisations of disidentification, many of which I now enumerate. I consider the lush plurality of Muñoz' *disidentification* to be a key strength of his framework, attesting to the richness and diversity of identificatory bonds, which cannot be reduced to any singular, neat, or commoditised formulation – we are talking, after all, about the process by which subjects are brought into being; how they perform and sustain themselves on a daily basis, and form the attachments with other subjects that steep human life with its sense of value, purpose, and meaning. In its definitional plenitude, Muñoz' disidentification also performs a gesture that he establishes as necessary for many for queers of colour- that of “having your cake and eating it”.

The sub-formulations of disidentification that Muñoz elaborates can be fruitfully divided into those that concern the qualities and character of identifications as a (psychosocial-) psychic, and those that take up disidentification as a political strategy. Concerning the former, Muñoz proposes disidentification as a process predicated on *failed* identifications. As he notes, “One possible working definition of queer that we might consider is this: queers are people who have failed to turn around to the “Hey, you there!” interpellating call of heteronormativity” (1999: 33). Linked to this failure and consequent abjection, Muñoz defines disidentification as a *recuperated* identification with a culturally marginalised object. Providing the example of a same-sex attracted teenage girl who is seduced by the image of butch lesbians invited onto a talk show as titillating fodder for a presumptively straight audience, Muñoz writes that here, “the phobic object... is reconfigured as sexy and glamorous, and not as the pathetic

and abject spectacle that it appears to be in the dominant eyes of the heteronormative culture... a powerful disidentification with the history of lesbian stereotyping... rehabilitates these images" (1999: 3). In this way, the subject's failed identifications might be mediated by others that rescue and recuperate marginalised figures as subjects and objects of desire, rather than ridicule and contempt.

Muñoz also emphasises disidentifications as cross-identifications, that is, identifications that occur across lines of 'race', gender, sexuality, class, and age, citing the example of James Baldwin's description of his childhood identification with the screen image of Bette Davis (from *The Devil Finds Work* (1999: 15). To this end, the following definition is particularly useful, "To disidentify is to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to "connect" with the disidentifying subject" (1999: 12)¹³. Thus we might formulate disidentifications as a form of identificatory trespass, a rebellious form of identification that insists on a connection where dominant ideologies insist there should be none. This formulation is useful for accenting the dynamics at play in both same-sex and 'transracial' intimacies, where connections, and the identifications on which they are predicated, are mediated by their being always-already proscribed. It might also be useful for thinking about how some MSM of colour relate to gay male communities that seek to marginalise them: that is, their insistence on claiming a stake in these communities in the face of White supremacy and structural racism. Without discounting the import of bodies and stratified social positions as sites of identification then, Muñoz also succeeds here in shifting from a prescriptive to a creative model of identification. Disidentification is also explicitly an intersectional theory, and resists what Muñoz calls "monocausal protocols... established through the reproduction of normative accounts of woman that always imply a white feminist subject and equally normativizing accounts of blackness that assume maleness" (1999: 8). We might also add to this list those homonormative formulations of gay identity that render the quintessential gay

¹³ I'm struck by the degree to which this could describe the relationship (of multi-layered alienation) of every non 'straight, White, male' from

male subject, either implicitly or explicitly, as White. Rather, disidentification formulates identification in terms of intersectionality, multiplicity, and partiality. Instead of an, 'off-the-shelf' model, in which subjects identify with objects in their totality, it privileges identification as partial, mediated, provisional, and potentially transgressive.

In this way the subject can deploy identification as a tool through which to crack open discourses and re-render them: "Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and re-circuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications" (1999: 31). Muñoz uses disidentification then as a way of thinking through the ways marginalized subjects draw on dominant discourses and work within them to tease out new meanings, as a matter of survival, pleasure, and joy. The example is provided of a Black lesbian subject reading Franz Fanon: "Disidentification offers a Fanon, for that queer and lesbian reader, who would not be sanitized; instead, his homophobia and misogyny would be interrogated while his anticolonial discourse was engaged as a *still* valuable yet mediated identification" (1999: 9). Thus, one way of defining disidentification is as a partial identification that also takes into account (without incorporating *tout court*) the whole. The point here, "is not to wilfully evacuate the politically dubious or shameful components within an identificatory locus", but rather involves working with them (1999: 12).

This also brings us to disidentification as a political strategy, which Muñoz frames as in the first place a question of survival for minoritarian subjects negotiating hostile worlds (1999: 4). It is also about world-making, as disidentifications are said to contain "an active kernel of utopian possibility" (1999: 25). Coming down squarely on the side of queer futurism (as opposed to the queer pessimism advocated more and less overtly by figures like Lee Edelman [2004] and Leo Bersani [1996]), Muñoz argues that, "we... need to hold on to and even *risk* utopianism if we are to engage in the labour of making a

queer world” (1999: 25). And in critiquing the homonormative state of LGBTQ+ communities, he rejects charges of nostalgia while actively seeking to recuperate the past as a way of imaging other possible futures: “longing for a pre-Stonewall version of queer reality is a look toward the past that critiques the present and helps us envision the future” (1999: 34). In its emphasis on looking to the past while cultivating a utopian investment in the future, disidentification provides a perspective that looks both ways and in so doing provides a means to historicise the present, while we fantasise about what other worlds might be possible.

Strategically Muñoz positions disidentification as “within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously” (1999: 5), and while acknowledging that, “its political agenda is clearly indebted to anti-assimilationist thought” (1999: 18), he argues that disidentification, “neither opts to assimilate within... a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (1999: 11). It is then simultaneously both inside and out, assimilated and marginal. This is what E. Patrick Johnson refers to as, “the both/and posture of disidentification” (2005: 141) – a formulation that again brings to mind the old adage about cakes getting eaten. How then might this subject who wants to have their cake and eat it be rehabilitated and recuperated through disidentification as a subject who cannot *afford* to choose, or one who *resists* the binary logic of either/or?

For reasons of theoretical nuance and complexity, and owing to its anchoring in the life experiences of marginalised subjects negotiating the default hostility of dominant paradigms, I believe Muñoz formulation of disidentification provides us with the most fruitful tool I have found through which to apprehend and analyse the life experiences of queers of colour and the myriad creative resistances they enact in order to live. Beyond this, as a QOC revision of a foundational concept in psychoanalysis – identification – I draw on this work to frame my readings of the mediated identifications of all subjects at odds with dominant paradigms.

Reading some of the empirical studies under review through the lens of disidentification proves fruitful on two fronts, providing us with ample evidence of disidentification in action, while enhancing the analyses generated within the original works. In their work with gay Asian men, Poon & Ho noted that rather than passively absorbing stereotypes, their participants actively resisted and continuously reconstructed meanings about their bodies and desires. Han (2009) makes the same point, drawing on Goffman's classic work on so-called "spoiled identities" (1963/1990). Han identified two prominent strategies amongst the gay Asian men he interviewed: one was the upending of the traditional stereotype of the emasculated Asian male by engendering a hypermasculine self-presentation; the other was the enthusiastic taking-up of the stereotype, emphasising 'femininity'. In the latter case, this sometimes came in the form of an enthusiastic engagement with drag culture, which is often cited by participants as a culture in which the abjected and marginalised can reframe exactly the qualities around which their abjection pivots, e.g. fat men become thick and fabulous; skinny guys transform into catwalk models – all of course, reframings mediated by 'race'. In both cases we can see examples of disidentification at work. The adoption of a hyper-masculine corporeal presentation by Asian men who are positioned as always-already emasculated (and thus inherently undesirable) works here as an act of defiance and refusal, as the body is reclaimed and (partially) mastered to disrupt the stereotype. In adopting a feminine presentation, the stereotype is embraced in such a way as to empower the subject – this is especially so if we factor in that many drag queens, femme boys, and sissies bypass the marketplace of 'masc4masc' gay male desire completely, tapping into an alternate dimension of self-identified straight and bi men who actively seek out femme-presenting and androgynous partners. As well as constituting the self then, disidentifications are always-also a matter of relation and the erotically desired (racialised, gendered) other.

Han et al. (2014) conducted interviews with 55 self-identified gay Asian men who deployed various strategies of disidentification with gay male culture. These included what the authors called "passing", in which participants identified as another 'race', which is generally only effective in online contexts; "distancing"

themselves from stereotypes of gay Asian men, emphasising that they were “not like other Asians”; “promoting racial visibility” within the gay male community, which involved actively fighting for a stake in gay male culture for Asian gay men; and alternatively emphasising their racial or ethnic identification as primary, and limiting their identification with the gay male community. Recalling the repeated finding that MSM of colour, even if they explicitly self-identify as “gay” do so on more limited terms and/or as a secondary identification to their ethnic investments (for studies with African American men see Green, 2007; Robinson, 2008; Bowleg, 2013; with Black Canadian men see Husbands et al. 2013; and Giwa, 2018; for South Asian men in the English Midlands (Das Nair & Thomas, 2012), I suggest this nuanced and tentative relationship to ‘gayness’ can be (re-)framed as a prominent example of disidentification.

Poon & Ho (2008) also showed how Asian MSM who predominantly partnered with White men reappropriated the ‘preference’ discourse – disidentifying with it - in order to reconfigure their racialised sexual attractions as organic and innate, resisting the potentially pathologising discourse of “internalised racism” (I explore further disidentifactory reclamations of the ‘preference’ discourse in my analysis of Grindr profiles in chapter 4). Amongst Poon & Ho’s Asian participants in Toronto, desire for White men was re-framed in terms of attraction to difference. This is important, because internalised racism crops up repeatedly as an explicatory framework for explaining why MSM of colour would want to partner with White men (Cheng, 2018), and can have the effect of pathologising and patronising its targets. While racism clearly has an effect on the interior lives of all subjects, and while this is inflected and patterned by a given subject’s ‘race’, “internalised racism” can very quickly become an accusation that in turn leads to the policing of subjects’ sex and dating lives in ways I touched upon in the Introduction.

Taken together, these empirical studies, read through the lens of disidentification, provide us with ample evidence of the creativity and diversity of responses to stereotypes. In turn this aspect of the literature is particularly important for re-positioning MSM of colour by emphasising (elements of) agency

and the multi-dimensional and heterogeneous nature of lived experiences of stereotypes and stock stories, and of marginalisation and discrimination. While these individualised strategies do not dismantle the regulatory force of dominant discourses outright, they do illustrate the limits of their power, as subjects – in this case multiply-marginalised queers of colour – demonstrate their ability to push back and create lacunae within dominant discourses in which it might just be possible to have one's cake *and* eat it.

Life beyond the hook-up: 'transracial' intimacies

Before moving onto different frameworks for the racialisation of sexuality – and presenting my own racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' approach, I want to shift the focus away from sex for a moment to think about something that has until now been largely absent, both from this project and from the academic work on 'race' and sexuality. In the latter, relative to the number of studies exploring racialised 'sex and dating preferences', there is a conspicuous lack of work engaging 'transracial' intimacies in the context of long-term coupling. Regardless of the form it takes, many users of dating and hook-up apps do end up 'coupling', and in fact, it is often the express purpose for being on such apps in the first place. I'm prompted to speculate about what this gap in the literature reflects: is it the generally pessimistic regard in which 'transracial' couples are held? Is it the difficulty of researching couples as opposed to public spaces such as apps, community presses, and LGBTQ+ bars and clubs? Is it the appeal of social-discursive explanations of 'race' and desire, which lend themselves especially well to analyses of hook-up practices, but which the messiness and nuance of everyday life in a couple threatens to unravel?

One thing we can say with confidence is that for every naïve representation of 'interracial' couples as holding out the promise of a utopian 'postracial' future, there is a reverse discourse that pathologises them. This is usually achieved either in terms of an 'anti-miscegenation' discourse, or in the case of communities of colour, from a position of 'racial' empowerment, wherein people of colour in relationships with White people are framed as variously: traitors,

collaborators, or internally racist self-haters. As Isaac Julien notes, “The main problem with representations of ‘interracial’ couples, be they gay or straight, is that the relationships are usually pathologized, and usually someone has to pay the price for transgressing those racial boundaries” (quoted in Scott, 1992: 313). Very often it may be both parties in the couple that “pay the price”. Taking up Julien’s observation, Scott argues that ‘interracial’ coupling is “framed by an analytic of suspicion and disapproval” (1992: 299). This analytic is buttressed by a linear formulation of the relationship between politics and desire, one in which a Black man’s coupling with a White man bespeaks an anti-Black or anti-Afrocentric politics. Scott nonetheless lauds this analytic of suspicion because it, “rescued desire from the mysterious realm of romance” (a realm we might well argue has now transmogrified into the discourse of ‘preference’), so that, “The desire of a black man for a white man can be situated within a social, political, and *historical* context” (1992: 301). Since this context is absolutely critical to apprehending the racialisation of sexuality, we might argue that the problem arises more with the two extremes wherein either: (1) the sexualities of ‘interracial/transracial’ couples are divorced entirely from society, politics, and history; or (2) they are reduced to a function of them.

In a theoretical reflection on ‘transracial’ coupling in the gay male community in the United States, Robinson (2008) is generally pessimistic about the prospects for such couples. He posits that racialised microaggressions easily become a feature of such relationships, often as a result of what he calls “perceptual segregation”, anchored to racialised ways of seeing the world, in which especially White partners fail to see the role played by ‘race’ in everyday life. Indeed, Amy C. Steinbugler, who has carried out the most extensive empirical studies of ‘interracial’ coupling in LGBTQ+ communities in the United States (2009, 2012, 2015), finds that “emotional labour” is involved for both parties in ‘interracial’ couples. Steinbugler coins the term “racework” to capture this labour, which she defines as, “the routine actions and strategies through which individuals maintain close relationships across lines of stratification” (2012: xiii). Steinbugler finds that such “racework” is a phenomenon experienced to greater and lesser degrees, as more and less of a burden, depending on the two

individuals involved. And, limning the relationship between racialised sexualities and 'racial' identities, Steinbugler also argues for, "the potential of intimate relationships to fashion individual racial identities" (2015: 2). In this vein, Stephanie K. Dunning's theoretical work (2009), exploring Black-White queer couplings through the lens of literature argues emphatically against the discourse that Black subjects in 'interracial' relationships with White people are self-hating and want to be White. Instead, Dunning suggests that Black subjects with White partners often "reframe", but in so doing, "solidify blackness" (2009: 7), and that 'interracially' coupling for the Black partner can have "racinating power" (2009: 76). Dunning's work accents ways in which experiences of 'transracial' intimacy can fundamentally reconstitute the subject's racial sense-of-self, suggesting this need not necessarily be in the direction of *de-racination*.

Shirley-Anne Tate (2015) shifts the focus from *racination* to explore how 'transracial' intimacy can *undo* race, although crucially not in ways that would obfuscate its effects. Tate shifts the emphasis from "inter-" to "*transracial* intimacy" (my italics), a move that has significant implications for how we theorise intimacy across *the Color Line* and what it might be capable of (in the preceding sections I have tried to adhere to the terminology used by the author I am discussing). Where "inter-" signifies 'between', suggesting that the two poles of (in this case) Black and White are left intact, "trans", meaning 'across', suggests a movement that spans these two purported poles, in ways that might in the process fundamentally reconstitute them. Tate focuses on the potential for intimacy to undo Fanon's "racial epidermal schema", by which the meanings of Blackness and Whiteness come to be inscribed on the bodies (and psyches) of Black and White subjects. It is this schema, Tate argues, that fixes 'race' and 'racial' meanings in place, and 'transracial' intimacy, through the proximity of bodies and the power of *touch*, potentially throws into relief the absurdity and fabrication that 'race' represents. Tate's focus on sexuality's reactivation and repetition - suggesting some element of commitment - also underlines the fundamentally differential stakes and distinct racialising practices involved in hook-ups and relationships.

A related perspective is provided by France Winddance Twine's (2010) ethnographic work on the 'interracial' intimacies between White parents and their Black children in Britain. In reading these relationships, Winddance Twine formulates the concept of "racial literacy", which she defines as, "a reading practice, a way of perceiving and responding to the racial climate and racial structures that individuals encounter daily. Racial literacy includes discursive, material and cultural practices in which parents train themselves and their children to recognize, name, challenge, and manage various forms of everyday racism" (2010: 8). Elsewhere, Winddance Twine has extended the concept of "racial literacy" to encompass romantic couplings (2006). Given her more traditionally anthropological focus, Winddance Twine under-theorises the concept of "racial literacy" in terms of the psychic processes that might undergird it; in my reading, it struck me that it requires some formulation of empathic identification at the psychic level, by which the subject is able to see through the eyes of the 'racial' other. "Racial literacy" also clearly varies by what position the subject occupies in a given 'racial' hierarchy. For instance, DuBois' theory of "double consciousness" might be thought of as a form of racial literacy that Black people in a racist society are *forced* to acquire, not through intimate attachments, but rather their experiences as marginalised subjects in White supremacist society, within which "racial literacy" becomes a question of survival. Thus, the highly contingent and late acquisition of "racial literacy" through intimate attachments might also be configured as another example of White 'racial' privilege.

Complementing this work, Gail Lewis (2009a) provides a psychoanalytically informed take on 'transracial' intimacy from the perspective of a Black daughter of a White mother. Where for Tate, the touch between two lovers becomes the basis for undoing the racial epidermal schema, Lewis hones in on the significance of touch in the relationship between (White) mother and (Black) baby, as the baby's skin acquires meanings from the mother that are overdetermined by the *sameness* of kin and the *difference* of 'race'. Describing mother and daughter as, "dancing sameness and difference", Lewis charts her mother's oscillation in and out of Whiteness (or what the author calls, "the emotional economies of

whiteness and the habits of thinking that it sometimes generates”), with Whiteness always available (for the mother) as a retreat from the racial vulnerabilities and injuries prompted by being mother to Black children. This vulnerability produces a range of affects, from the mother’s terror of racist violence, giving way to resentment and anger as racism becomes displaced onto the Black child (we might also say Black partner) that is the target of racism’s ire¹⁴. From the other side, this resentment, and a corresponding desire to protect the White mother (we might also say White partner) from the ravages of racism’s abjections, generates anger. We can configure these affects as products of the emotionally overwhelming identifications laid down in the intimate space between mother and daughter (lover and lover). Lewis’ work prompts us to consider the degree to which alongside “racial literacy”, and perhaps as a consequence of it, ‘transracial’ intimacies are defined by cleavages and antagonism, wrapped up in a bundle of ambivalence with the most visceral feelings of love.

By moving beyond the instrumentalised hook-up and engaging with the messiness and nuance of transracial intimacies, the works reviewed in this section do justice to the foundational ambivalence and high affective stakes at play when people from different racial groups build lives together. Consequently, I found this work to be especially fruitful for my reading of interview transcripts in chapter 5, where the complexity of participant investments exceeded the political and emotional range afforded by work in the space of ‘racial preference’/‘sexual racism’.

“Sexual racism”, ‘racial preference’ and “the racialisation of desire”

I conclude this overview of existing work in the hybrid field of ‘racialised sexualities’ with a discussion of the ways in which these sexualities are framed.

¹⁴ Strikingly, Lewis notes that this resentment is also driven by the material fact of the Black child’s signifying to the world her mother’s *transgressive* sexuality; a transgression that leads to her mother’s empathic identification with an openly gay man – Peter Tatchell – who campaigned to be an MP amidst the high-homophobia of nineteen eighties Britain. This in turn attests powerfully both to the ontological queerness of ‘transracial’ intimacy, and the double queerness enacted when both ‘transracial’ and same-sex dynamics are present.

The naming of racialised sexualities has enormous significance for how we come to understand them, as the discussion below demonstrates.

Several authors have deployed the language of “sexual racism” to describe racialised sexualities (Plummer, 2007; Callander et al., 2016; Robinson & Frost, 2018). Of the study’s I reviewed, Plummer’s (2007) project is the first to use the term “sexual racism”, which is then picked up and expanded by Callander et al. (2016), who define “sexual racism” as, “a specific form of racial prejudice enacted in the context of sex and dating” (2016: 3). The authors go on to argue that, “sexual racism is a useful category to group the specific practices that make it unusual, such as its context, associated behaviours, how it is perceived, and its effects” (2015a: 17). Although Callander et al. (rightly I think) make a case for the specificity of the ‘race’ and sexuality intersection, they also raise two possible concerns in relation to this terminology. The first is that while “sexual racism” might demonstrate some common particularities compared to other sites of racism in psychosocial life, it may be unhelpful to reify these particularities into a discrete categorical formulation distinguishing it from racism more broadly. The need to grapple with the way racism – rather than just ‘race’ – works through erotic desire and sexuality should certainly be a concern for all researchers in this area, but arguably “sexual racism” is not a useful terminology under which to do this work. The second concern Callander et al. discuss is whether erotic desire is a suitable case for the label of ‘racism’; the authors suggest that the term “sexual racism” may not be appropriate “when it comes to understanding something as complex as personal desire” (2016: 16). Indeed, while guarding against the suggestion that erotic desire and sexuality be allowed a ‘free pass’ in matters of ‘race’ and racism, I do think we do need to grapple with its phenomenological specificity, with sexuality seeming to occupy a special place for many individuals (an emphasis on profundity and having come from somewhere ‘deep inside’ recurs through participants’ attempts to explicate their sexualities in chapter 5). Another criticism I would posit of the “sexual racism” terminology is that if racism is defined in everyday terms – for example, as “prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior” (OED, 2012) - then

“sexual racism” covers only one, narrow aspect of the racialisation of (desire *as*) sexualities. This also happens from the position of a default White subject, since a queer person of colour who excludes White partners shouldn’t be considered sexually racist (presuming we accept a formulation of racism as structural and specifically predicated on White supremacy). By potentially reducing erotic desire’s racialisation to prejudice then, I would argue that the terminology of “sexual racism” risks severely impoverishing our understanding of racialised sexualities.

Robinson & Frost (2018) seek to mediate this risk by employing a dual concept framework comprised of “sexual racism” and ‘racial preference’, defining the former as “as a subset of preferences that are driven by prejudice” and the latter as, “all predispositions for a particular race” (2018: 2742). The problem with this approach as I see it is that it merely serves to highlight the limitations of “sexual racism”, while reifying the problematic language of ‘preference’, which as I explore below, constitutes a consumerist rhetoric of racist denial and occlusion. A final reason to contest the terminology of “sexual racism”, is that it promotes an ‘aberrant individuals’ approach to racism, locating it in the minds of individuals, who can then be labelled “bad apples”, rather than focusing on how societal discourses and structures “get inside” individuals. This “bad apples” approach is in fact exemplified by another study from Callander et al. (2015b), in which the authors attempt to answer the question, “Is sexual racism *really* racism?” by comparing participants’ (N=2177) Likert scale responses about topics such as “multiculturalism” (engaged as a marker of what the authors call “generic racism”) with their attitudes towards “sexual racism”. This study also betrays an implicitly superficial and linear model of erotic desire, in which racialised sexualities would neatly correspond with racist politics, a view that a psychoanalytic formulation of desire and subjectivity (as I attempt in chapter 3 of this project) could not sustain.

In LGBTQ+ communities and society at large, the go-to language for erotic desire’s racialisation is that of ‘racial preference’, which has emerged as the dominant discourse through which MSM formulate racialised sexualities in

online profiles (Callander et al. 2012; Riggs 2013; Robinson, 2015). It is not uncommon to see references to 'preference' on Grindr profiles (examples crop up in chapter 4), usually in the form of a list of criteria that potential partners are expected to meet, followed by a defensive, "just my preference" (we might add that what gets left unarticulated is here is, "*before you start going in on me*"). For those seeking to stave-off accusations that their erotic desires are problematic (e.g. racist or *femme-phobic*), the preference discourse offers a rhetorical and a psychic defence: rhetorically, by seeking to shut down debate and render further interrogation moot; psychically by defending against the anxiety generated by contemplating one's implication in prejudice. Its rhetorical power is also generated through an equivalence with gender preference, whereby 'race' is reduced to the same innate biological logic that governs homo- and heterosexuality, according to the dominant "born this way" discourse of sexuality.

Thus, one of the effects of the 'preference' discourse is to circumscribe the ways that the racialisation of sexuality can be thought. Some of the empirical work conducted to date traces the rhetorical functions to which the 'preference' discourse is put. Rigg's (2013) study of 403 profiles of White Australian users expressing anti-Asian sentiment on (the Grindr antecedent) Gaydar, found that "personal preference" was the second most common form of rhetorical defence (N=110) for such sentiments. In a later work, Riggs (2018) explicitly calls out the by-now immortal line, "it's just a preference", framing it in terms of Butler's concept of "excitable speech" (1997), which emphasises the performativity and functionality of discourse; that is (after Foucault), what language *does*. For Riggs, these effects of racial epithets on profiles are two-fold; they "marginalize their targets. But they also render visible the affective nature of whiteness: its fears and insecurities, and the constant repetition it requires to maintains (sic) its tenuous claim to hegemony" (2018: 141). In ways that I will demonstrate through my own reading of Grindr profiles, hook-up apps and websites become a site at which White hegemony is reasserted, often in ways that explicitly betrays the anxiety circulating around its dominant position. This argument is further strengthened by Robinson's empirical study of 100 profiles on Adam4Adam in

Austin, Texas, for which he also conducted semi-structured interviews with site users; Robinson's study attested to the ubiquity of the 'preference' discourse, which Robinson then frames in terms of Hill-Collins's formulation of the "new racism" (2006), wherein historical anti-Black racisms are reincarnated in new guises more suited to an ostensibly colour-blind age. Hill-Collins argues convincingly in *Black Sexual Politics* (2006) that the "new racism" has found in sexual stereotypes and the regulation of the erotic an especially rich terrain.

'Preference', as seemingly innate, incidental and innocuous, also draws on a consumerist discourse of freedom, which functions as an untouchable, taken-for-granted totem of liberal democracy and neo-liberal modernity. Callander et al. (2012) note that those contesting the anti-racist interrogation of 'racial preference' often do so on the basis of appeals to sexual freedom, even going so far as to accent the importance of sexual liberation for a group – gay men – who have historically been denied this right. While this logic seems to suggest that gay men, having once been marginalised, should now be free to pursue any and every desire and discrimination, with scant regard for the consequences, it attests to the potency of a liberationist discourse in matters of the erotic, a potency compounded by the ideology of neo-liberalism. We might also map the evolution of the "liberation" discourse, from its anchoring in social justice movements (Black and Women's Liberation, and the Gay Liberation movement of the 1970s; or the social justice-oriented formulation of Catholicism originating in Latin America under the banner of "Liberation Theology"), wedded to transformational political change of the capitalist order, to liberation's co-optation by neo-liberal capitalism, whereupon it becomes diluted down to questions of consumerist preference and banished from the public to the private realm. And, as Eng argues, "nowhere is the language of choice more important than in the intimate space of family and kinship relations" (2010: 9). While contesting this discourse of sexual liberation at all costs, the debate about the racialisation of desire within the gay male community press has often been framed in terms of freedom vs. prejudice, an unproductive dichotomy that I would argue little of the academic work to date has convincingly moved beyond.

‘Preference’ is also positioned by some as a defensive go-to strategy for men who wish to close down discussion of their desires, with preference constructed as a site to which certain rights and freedoms must be unquestioningly attached. This approach also renders ‘preference’ fundamental to the on-going project of denial vis-à-vis the racialisation of sexualities; a project that is fundamental to the maintenance of the present system of wilful blindness and enforced silence¹⁵ (and for which currently the only prominent counter-discourse is an inadequate riff on [typically ‘bad apple’] racism). Gregorio-Smith (2018) studied the ‘below the line’ comments left on a *Daily Beast* article that discussed a study about ‘racial preference’ by Callander et al. (2015). He identified four rhetorical strategies used by commenters to contest the idea that desire – or preference – was an appropriate site for an anti-racist intervention. Amongst these was the appeal to gendered sexual ‘preference’, from which ‘racial preference’ borrows its language, and which leads therefore, by a feat of analogous thinking, to the positioning of racialised sexualities as both a matter of liberty and ‘natural rights’, and as inherently above reproach. Other strategies of denial employed by commentators were to provide an alternative definition of racism that meant that racialised desires could not possibly constitute racism; dismissing the debate with reference to the political correctness bogeyman (“stop trying to politicise desire, it’s none of your business” – a statement that again bespeaks what Eng calls “the racialization of intimacy” [2010])¹⁶; and using biological essentialist arguments to suggest that people have an innate genetic predisposition towards people of their own racial group. Contra the intentions of their authors, taken together, these defensive rhetorical strategies quite forcefully make the case for precisely why sexuality must be studied through an anti-racist lens, and the difficulties we prompt if we turn to the language of ‘preference’.

¹⁵ It also recalls what Derrida in his “Last Word” on the subject defines as a fundamental aspect of racism’s endurance, formulated by Holland in turn (2012: 98) as, “the simultaneity of repudiation and acceptance that so characterizes racism’s contradictory appeal”.

¹⁶ An argument that speaks to the privileging – encountered recurrently through my research - of sexuality as a site for the exercise of freedom.

While some studies make critical engagements with the language of 'preference', others nonetheless reproduce it, such as Callander et al. (2012, 2015) and Crockett (2010, 2016). In the case of Callander et al. their invocation of preference sits alongside a critical interrogation of its application, and its use seems largely intended to mirror the language used by their participants (something I also did in my research interview question). Crockett's work focuses on gay men's sexual history narratives and the archives of the 'National Association of Black and White Men Together'. This organisation was set up in 1980 explicitly to promote the visibility of 'interracial' couples (arguably idealising them as a result), as well as to fight racism within the gay community and homophobia in society at large. While correctly identifying the academic and wider cultural marginalisation of 'race' as an aspect of sexuality, Crockett invokes the language of gendered sexual 'preference' to reify racialised erotic desires into a category he calls, "racial sexual preference". In this way, while 'race' is brought back into the frame, it simultaneously becomes the grounds for a problematic identity category on a par with 'gay' and 'straight'. I would argue that to make any such move would only be to more intensely and consciously regulate sexuality, and to further foreclose the range of possibilities for sexual subjects. At a time when I would argue – in the queer tradition - that we should be dismantling those social identities specifically concerned with the kinds of sex we want to have and who we want to have it with, Crockett is seeking to instantiate new ones. Thus I will argue now that the racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' provides a fruitful alternative framework for parsing the racialised sexualities, one that captures a process without seeking to reify it into an identity, or formulate it as individualised and innate (as do "sexual racism" and 'racial preference' respectively).

Project aims and contributions to knowledge

Following the critical exploration of existing work above, I conclude this chapter by enumerating the contributions I hope my project can make to the ongoing imperative of tarrying with the ways in which 'race' moves through sexuality.

1) Formulating the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality': the 'RoDaS' framework

One issue with much of the work in this area to date is the failure to move sufficiently past the discourse of 'preference', accompanied by the emergence of "sexual racism", which I believe is a potentially problematic response to 'preference' from the social science academes. As socially-engaged researchers of 'race', I think we need to be concerned with the context outside of academia to which our work might contribute and thus I promote my own approach on the basis that it bypasses problematic, neo-liberal formulations of identity and "bad apple" racism, to which I feel existing work in this area often inadvertently contributes.

As I delineated in the Introduction, this project responds in part to the debate about 'racial preference' happening (among other places) within the gay male community. Therefore, in highlighting the problems with the 'real-world's' go-to concept of 'racial preference', and with the limitations of the dominant neo-liberal formulations of racism and sexual freedom that circulate around it, I suggest that the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' framework can better tarry with the complexities, particularities, and ambivalences of racialised sexualities as psychodynamic, and historicised-racialised formations. The RoDaS framework also addresses a weakness of existing studies (and wider debates about 'racial preference'), which fail to adequately formulate and account for what I call sexuality's *messiness*. Some studies imply intentionality on the part of subjects pursuing racialised desires, while others configure such subjects as commoditised vectors for racialising and racist discourses, with little to no room allowed to account for the particularity of the ways a given subject identifies with and inhabits them.

A further broad weakness of existing work in the area of racialised sexualities, is the failure to formulate 'race' sufficiently, eliding a crucial opportunity to think through the ways in which 'race' is produced in and through (desire *as*) sexuality, rather than merely inflecting it as an always-already certain ontological presence. Conversely the RoDaS framework engages extensively with

'race' theories, which I argue in turn, are crucial to understanding the contribution of sexuality to the enduring appeal and stickiness of 'race'. I thus draw on 'race' theories (racial formation theory, psychodynamic formulations, and critical race theories) to accent 'race' as an historical formation, as psychically- and corporeally mediated, and as a question of *effects* rather than *intents*. In so doing, I hope to have staked some new ground in limning the *particularity* of the 'race'-sexuality nexus.

2) Psychosocial studies: a transdisciplinary and hybridly empirical-theoretical approach

My reading and research position from within the *transdiscipline* (Frosh, 2013; Baraitser, 2015; Johnson, 2015) of psychosocial studies allows me to incorporate multiple critical perspectives, eschewing boundaries altogether, and reading across, rather than between or within, any one discipline. Many of the empirical studies of the racialisation of sexuality to date are carried out in disciplinary silos, as a result of which they tend to reference only those studies that emanate from the same disciplinary tradition. Conversely this project draws on theoretical perspectives from psychoanalysis, queer theory (including queer of colour perspectives), black (and 'quare') studies, and critical race theory, and scholarship and methodological approaches from the disciplines of critical psychology, sociology, geography, media studies, and psychosocial studies itself.

Viewed holistically, this project also pursues a hybridised empirical-theoretical approach that I would argue is inherently psychosocial. Although I envisioned this at the outset as a more traditionally empirical project, the theoretical component of this work expanded organically, and I became convinced of the value of theory to address my core research questions and to enhance my fieldwork. I thus present a final thesis that is roughly equal parts theory and fieldwork. As prospective advantages of such an approach, I hope that my empirical work is enriched and nuanced by a more thorough engagement with theory, and conversely, that the real-world application of theory 'in the field' lends vigour and rigour to what can sometimes become the rarefied and esoteric

pursuit of theoretical work bearing little relation to lived experience. By pursuing a hybrid theoretical-empirical approach, my intent is to hold onto the fundamental dialectic that I want to suggest should constitute the basis of rigorous scholarship across both approaches, in what is all-to-often formulated as a discrete binary.

3) Mapping the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' in theory and 'in the field'

Carrying theory with me to my fieldwork, I apply the RoDaS framework across two distinct but complimentary sites. The first, Grindr, is a prominent site of gay male/MSM sociality where I am able to engage the *subject positions* of Grindr users as articulated through their profiles, analysing aggregate patterns across them. While some of the existing work in this area has focused on Grindr or similar apps (e.g. Callander et al. 2012, 2016; Daroya, 2018), my readings of the app benefits from my novel framework. I then shift focus to *subjectivities*, staking new ground in the biographical interviews by engaging participants who self-identify as 'having' racialised sexualities, and in so doing giving voice to lived experience over more speculative and strictly sociological analyses. In so doing, I move beyond the scope of existing work on MSM and racialised sexualities, simultaneously privileging particularity and – I hope – injecting a much-needed element of nuance and empirical validity.

The empirical strands of enquiry within this project also shift the geographical frame of existing work at the nexus of 'race' and gay male/MSM sexuality. All but one of the studies I have found on the topic of racialised gay male sexualities (Das Nair & Thomas, 2012) were conducted in the United States, Canada, and Australia. While acknowledging the continuities of racisms across these White supremacist societies – all forged in or out of the common, colonialist crucible of European modernity – each of these national contexts also manifests its own particularities, to which it is the task of 'race' researchers to attend. In this project, I have attempted to hold onto the particularity of the London/UK-specific 'racial' frame as it manifests in and through sexualities mapped across

the Grindr profiles in chapter 4, and in the in the course of the interviews analysed in chapter 5.

4) Re-centring (to de-centre) Whiteness

In this project, I name, and 're-centre to de-centre' Whiteness as a means of elevating 'race' consciousness among Whites and because, neither 'race' nor same-sex 'transracial' intimacies can be adequately apprehended and analysed outside of a frame that includes 'racial' thinking's originator, chief cheer-leader, and beneficiary. Sensitive to concerns of critics of Whiteness studies (Winddance Twine & Gallagher, 2008), I seek to apply pressure to Whiteness here (in ways that can sometimes be uncomfortable for White subjects, including myself) as a necessary object of critical interrogation. Across this project, Whiteness appears variously as: the racialised terrain on which the entire edifice of sexuality and gay identity are constructed; the top of an eroticised hierarchy of objects of desire; the author of numerous racialised and colonially-anchored stereotypes and scripts about the racial Other; the racialised inflection of the primary *gaze* and *public* to be found on Grindr; and a site of identification and disidentification (Muñoz, 1999) e.g. as manifest in the identity-sexuality nexus of White men and Black men in my research interviews.

5) Capturing aspects of the lived experiences of MSM of colour

Addressing a relative dearth of academic work on the lived experiences of queers of colour, especially within the UK, I attempt to keep the positionality of a (male) queer of colour subject in mind throughout this project. My ability to do so is clearly mediated by my own White racial identity and subject position, and the multitude of my racialised identifications, investments, relationships and experiences. Strategies I deploy to centre the queer of colour subject are: drawing extensively on work from queer of colour authors; centring the experiences and profiles of MSM of colour in chapter 4; and engaging a biographical interview methodology that was explicitly intended to allow participants to shape the content of the interviews, as well as their own

narratives and responses, with two of the final four case studies presented engaging with the narratives of gay and bi Black men. Throughout, I have tried to capture and re-centre some of the textures of MSM of colour's lived experience as it plays out through sex, dating lives, sexualities, and identities.

Chapter 2 ~ Racialising ‘desire as sexuality’: a theoretical intervention

I frame the following chapter as both a ‘theoretical intervention’ and as my theoretical ‘workings out’. To put the production of this project into chronological order, it was this foray into theories of desire, sexuality, and their racialisation, that was the starting point for all of the other work that follows. While I have sought later on to marshal the insights I generate here into a more concise (and perhaps compelling) ‘RoDaS’ analytic ‘framework’, I include these theoretical ‘workings out’ as an attempt to stay with the messiness of sexuality as an object of enquiry, and to provide context for the origins of the RoDaS framework as I apply it in the field.

Broadly then, my aim in this chapter is to deploy critical theories to capture *some* of the ways that ‘race’ gets into desire, producing the ‘racial’ formation (Omi & Winant, 1986/2014) of sexuality. I formulate the processes involved in producing a racialised sexuality as intrinsically, indissolubly, psychosocial; that is, as having imbricated psychic, social, and embodied dimensions, which are registered by the subject as a profoundly *visceral* aspect of their experience of self. Epistemologically, this locates me on the terrain laid out by Sylvia Wynter, which she describes as the, “hybridly biological (bios) and narrative-discursive (logos) levels of existence” (1994: 48). For Wynter, this hybridity results in a *specifically human* perceptual framework, which girds all our interactions with, and apprehensions of, the external world. Moving beyond strictly social constructionist work in the social sciences, my aim is to *incorporate* the materiality of the psyche and the body (bios) as these are given life by language and culture (logos). As such my epistemological approach also echoes Butler’s formulation of gender (1990) as something generated through a material body that is always-already mediated by socio-culturally anchored performances of gender (inscribed in, and giving life to, the flesh, and predicated on psychic mechanisms of identification), which make this body socially intelligible.

To engage in this theoretical work is also – as I note below – to construct a, “passionate fiction” (De Lauretis, 1994, xiv). This framework works *for me*, here

and now, but to claim something like *total* knowledge about sexuality is to underestimate and misapprehend it as an object of enquiry- the complexity, slipperiness, and rich diversity of *sexualities*. Such an insight about “truth”, which is integral to the post-modern relativism of queer theory, has not stopped queer scholars working productively in the domain of sexuality, producing knowledge that thrills, stimulates, and resonates with its queer audience. Inspired by the work I have read across queer (De Lauretis, 1994; Dean, 2000), queer of colour (Muñoz, 1999), and ‘quare’ theories (Scott, 1992, 2010; Walcott, 2003, 2006, 2009; Johnson, 2005) especially – much of it as brave as it is (intimidatingly) brilliant - this strand of enquiry is, then, my own very small attempt to make such a theoretical intervention. I also note the historical importance of theories emanating from disciplines such as sexology and psychoanalysis on the ways that sexuality is formulated and experienced by individual subjects and society-at-large. By seeking to channel the early, radical spirit of such bodies of theory, I hope to use them here in a fashion that is revelatory rather than regulatory and without the need to construct discrete ‘types’ (e.g. as does sexology – and to a lesser degree psychoanalysis – in its construction of ‘*the homosexual*’).

The theories I am marshalling (especially psychoanalysis) were not necessarily intended to elucidate how desire becomes ‘racialised’, and in this sense, I am both reformulating and repurposing them for my own requirements. To some degree, the range of approaches represented reflects my position within the ‘transdiscipline’ of psychosocial studies (Frosh, 2013; Johnson, 2015; Baraitser, 2015). Rather than locating myself within any one body of theory, I practise a form of transdisciplinary, theoretical ‘infidelity’, adopting a magpie-like approach that seeks out and marshalls insights with the aim of producing a hybrid framework capable of accounting for (always-already) racialised sexualities. Although I evidently lean most heavily on psychoanalysis, this is always while seeking to open up a dialogue with perspectives from queer and queer of colour, and Black and ‘quare’ studies. When they are – or can be made to become - alert to the liveness and pertinence of ‘race’, queer theories provide a corrective to psychoanalysis’ undeniable normative streak. Thus, despite the extensive and compelling feminist and homo- critiques that have been levelled at

psychoanalysis, numerous queer scholars have found in it a rich and fruitful terrain for self-knowledge and social critique. Crucially though, it is only through 'quare' (or Black queer) theory (Scott, 1992, 2010, 2014; Johnson, 2000; Ross, 2000; Walcott, 2003, 2006) and queer of colour analyses (Muñoz, 1999; Eng, 2001, 2010; Ferguson, 2003), as well as work from Black studies and critical 'race' theory (Spillers, 2003; Holland, 2012), that I was able to think seriously about sexuality in a way that would not, like psychoanalysis and 'canonical' queer theory, privilege sexual difference and gender. For example, the theoretical formulations of sexuality that come closest to my own are those of Tim Dean (2000, 2009) and Teresa De Lauretis (1994), with both authors drawing heavily on Laplanche's reading of Freud's work on sexuality (1970/1985). Like my own framework, Dean (2000) instantiates a diphasic reading of sexuality, allowing two discrete (if overlapping) objects – 'desire' and 'sexuality' – to emerge (I explore the distinction and relationship between these two objects in depth within this chapter). However, on my reading, Dean uses this argument to construct desire as a kind of 'pure space' that we need to try and access in order to bypass sexuality, at which point we can effectively defenestrate gender and 'race'; these categories by now rendered as the parochial concerns of identity obsessives. More broadly, Dean attends neither to sexuality as an intrinsically *White* racial formation, nor to the actual, existing *reality* that desire *as* (always-already) sexuality *is* negotiated through (always 'in-process') social categories of identity (I am talking here of 'race', gender, and class more so than sexual identities), and that these negotiations represent an eroticisation of the social that is not so easily discarded. Further, despite the best efforts of first wave queer theorists such as Dean, not all subjects are ready, willing or able to cast off their (psycho-) social identities *tout court*. Such an anti-identitarian agenda is something that much of the work in queer of colour (specifically Muñoz, 1999; Ferguson, 2003; Eng, Halberstam & Muñoz, 2005;) and 'quare' (specifically Harris, 1996; Johnson, 2005; Holland, 2012) theory compelling critiques as an intellectual, political, and ethical non-starter.

Racialising 'desire as sexuality'

In the early nineties, amidst the nursery rhymes and Disney greatest hits compilations that formed the soundtrack to my childhood car journeys, my parents would manage to slip in the odd “adult contemporary” choice of their own; Tasmin Archer, Womack & Womack, a “Woman2Woman” compilation of female singer-songwriters. Whenever I hear these records now, synonymous with a time and place where I could barely understand their lyrics, but appreciated the way their rhythms and syncopations worked with the melodies, they strike me with a particularly evocative force. It is that force that gets called *Proustian*, after Proust and his *madeleines*. A sensation that collapses time and stokes visceral affect. When I started writing the first draft of this chapter about desire (soon to be unthinkable except in terms of sexuality), a line from one of these records came back to me. It was K.D Lang opining that, “constant craving has always been” (1992). Indeed, I often find myself playing this game of “free association song lyrics”; a song comes to me, seemingly out of nowhere, often after years in the wilderness of my unconscious, and I try to decode *why*. *Why here and why now?* Now I’m in analysis, laying on the couch five times a week, I’ve started writing these lyrics down, in the back of whatever notebook I’m carrying, for future decipherment. In this case it didn’t seem to require much working out. Without naming it *as such*, this one short line, by a self-identified lesbian no less (an inspiring intervention from the queer gods?), seemed to provide me with a way into tarrying with desire. Laing’s lyric succinctly captures desire’s insatiable and inexhaustible qualities, limning the way we experience this kind of wanting as profound and visceral, and she attests to the sense we (/I) have that there is something timeless and fundamental about this condition. This was not a bad starting point, given that I had begun with the altogether more disingenuous, mealy-mouthed terminology of (“racial”) ‘preference’; my segue into desire then, was already paying dividends.

I think it bears repeating that my aim in writing about ‘desire as sexuality’ is not to formulate a singular, coherent, and universal model within which ‘race’ can be *baked-in*; rather I am seeking to deploy prominent psychoanalytic renderings of

these two discrete but overlapping objects, desire and sexuality, in conversation with work from queer/queer of colour and Black and 'quare' studies, to think *some of the ways* that 'race' can work with, in, and through 'desire as sexuality'; how, in the guise of sexuality, 'race' can hack desire's circuits to become not just inscribed but *incorporated*, swallowed whole (more of this to follow), sequestered, and once there, all-too-easily repressed from consciousness. I privilege psychoanalysis here because it is *my* primary heuristic for self-understanding, as a reader, student, and ambivalent analysand. I include other critical theories because I think psychoanalysis in its orthodox disciplinarily silo is - to borrow the language of consumer law - "not fit for purpose". Nonetheless, my aim here is not to arrive at something I would call 'truth', but rather to construct, through the medium of theoretical *decoupage*, a formulation of desire that does justice to my present objects of enquiry. I thus proceed in the spirit Bersani & Dutoit invoke through their argument that, "The only guarantee any theory can give about itself is to expose itself as a passionate fiction" (quoted in De Lauretis, 1994: xiv). This "passionate fiction" seems an especially pertinent rubric under which to attempt any theorisation of sexuality, and I have tried to keep these words in mind (encouraging readers to do likewise) throughout what follows.

Freud's *Three Essays*

I begin my foray into psychoanalytic treatments of (desire as) sexuality via what might be called their urtext; Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*¹⁷. Freud's insistence on sexual energy as manifest in the libido as the ultimate, animating life force in human behaviour (which he describes in terms of "the domination of the most unruly of all the instincts", 1949/2011: 39) has remained one of his most startling and enduring insights. The *Three Essays* concern themselves with perversions, and infantile and adolescent sexualities respectively (1949/2011), applying the psychoanalytic methods of inferring what is 'normal' from what is 'abnormal' (or for Freud, and in the language of his

¹⁷ While sexuality had been a prominent feature of psychoanalysis and its formulation of the psyche and human behaviour from the get-go, the *Three Essays* was the first time that a paper had been devoted singularly to the topic of human sexuality.

time, “perverse” or “aberrant”)¹⁸, and engaging in the forensic work of psychical archaeology to unearth the repressed roots of adult sexuality. I begin with an orthodox – and what now seems like a conservative – rendering of Freud’s theory of sexuality, in order to trace the process by which psychoanalysis, in many of its dominant clinical manifestations, was rendered normative (Dean & Lane, 2000). In a project concerned with homosexual (even sometimes *queer*) desires, I think it’s important to acknowledge this reading of psychoanalysis, which became a highly effective clinical weapon deployed against non-heterosexuals. I then move onto prominent alternative interpretations of Freud; readings which I find more compelling, and which attest to the richness and conflictual complexity both of his work, and that which it’s describing here.

Freud describes the libido as “a quantitatively variable force which could serve as a measure of processes and transformations occurring in the field of sexual excitation” (1949/2011: 94). Several times he makes an analogy with “hunger” (e.g. 1949/2011: 13), the logic of which implies that just as a hungry belly must be sated with food, so the libido must be fed in order to return to a state of psychic equilibrium (“copulation, which leads to a release of the sexual tension and a temporary extinction of the sexual instinct – a satisfaction analogous to the sating of hunger” [1949/2011: 28]). The hunger analogy frames sexuality in terms of what Laplanche calls Freud’s “hydraulic model”, an economic formulation emphasising the build-up and movement of *quantities* of psychic energy, a too-great concentration of which leads to a state of “unpleasure”. This version of sexuality is also reflected in Freud’s model of psychic functioning in *Beyond The Pleasure Principle* (1920/2006) wherein, “one aspiration of the psychic apparatus is to keep the quantity of excitation present within it at the lowest possible level, or at least to keep it constant” (134). In seeking to sate itself, Freud suggested that the sexual appetite can be configured in terms of two-factor model of sexual aim (what one wants to do) and sexual object (who one wants to do it with). Ostensibly, the hydraulic model of sexuality is limited to

¹⁸ It is this methodology that allows for queer readings of Freud as a radical whose work indicates the universality of perversity (Dollimore, 1991/2018; De Lauretis, 1994; Dean, 2000). The apparently aberrant shows what is universal, the only difference in the case of the normal being the mode in which the Oedipal drama becomes “resolved”.

the ‘aim’ part of this configuration; if sexuality is reduced to a matter of managing tension, then *any* object will do; a descriptive which in reality appears to hold for very few sexual subjects, revealing the limits of this approach. The hydraulic model is nonetheless useful for accenting the visceral profundity of the desire-sexuality nexus and locating experiences (if not necessarily the source) of it squarely *within the body*. In fact, Laplanche argues that hunger functions here not merely as an analogy for sexuality, but that Freud formulates the sexual drive as “leaning” on the appetite for nourishment (“the sexual drive is propped upon a nonsexual, vital function... the instinct is hunger and the function feeding” [1970/1985: 16]).

Freud also locates this physical experience of sexuality as present from birth, with breast feeding and the anal and genital stimulation that occurs while attending to the infant’s toilet representing early sensual - and later, sexual - experiences. Freud formulates the infant as passing through stages anchored to parts of the body - the ‘oral’, ‘anal’, and ‘phallic’ - which are configured as “component drives”¹⁹, and set up like a teleology through which the normally developing child will pass (“These phases of sexual development are usually passed through smoothly... It is only in pathological²⁰ cases that they become active and recognisable to superficial observation”; 1949/2011: 75). Being localised to specific parts of the body, each of these phases follows its own separate (partial) aim, “which is merely the attainment of a certain sort of pleasure... the sexual instinct is not unified and is at first without an object, that is autoerotic” (1949/2011: 110). *Three Essays* can certainly be read as though Freud is arguing for discrete stages of autoeroticism and object-seeking, so that in its earliest years, the infant does not experience erotic desire for the other, but rather a narcissistic desire for pleasurable stimulation of its own body, which the carer (not yet construed as ‘separate’ by the infant) brings about.

¹⁹ Notably, among Freud’s “component drives” or “instincts” are also to be found “sadism” and “masochism”.

²⁰ I note here as well the loadedness of Freud’s terminology, which so easily lent itself to the medicalization and oppressive social regulation of sexuality facilitated by psychoanalysis in, for example, the postwar US; forever threatening to undo his overarching radicalism.

Further, the sexual instinct we are told, “has to struggle against certain mental forces which act as resistances, and of which shame and disgust are the most prominent” (1949/2011: 40). These “mental dams” (“disgust, shame and morality”; 1949/2011: 57) act in conflict with the sexual aim and shape its ultimate development. For Freud, the single most important influence on the development of sexuality is the Oedipus complex, the incestuous unconscious love triangle between the child and its (presumed to be present) mother and father. The importance of the Oedipus complex for Freud is clear: “It represents the peak of infantile sexuality, which through its after-effects, exercises a decisive influence on the sexuality of adults” (1949/2011: 104).

For the male child who reaches his phallic stage, the normal path of development involves his desiring his mother, which brings him up against the incest taboo, and puts him in competition with his father, a figure the boy knows will always reign supreme. Acknowledging this fact, and, menaced by the implicit threat of castration (“castration anxiety”), the boy forgoes his desire for the mother and develops a strong identificatory bond with the father. As such, his assumption of genital sexuality and its attendant masculinity is predicated to a significant degree on wanting *to be* – or be like – the father. In the case of girls, a strong desire for the mother is also present – there is an always-implicit assumption that mother is primary caregiver – but this is abandoned as a consequence of the girl’s “penis envy”, and the realisation that her mother is likewise phallically-deficient. According to the teleology of the “Electra complex”, the girl’s desire for the mother is supplanted by a strong maternal identification, while the father becomes the main focus of the girl’s sexual appetite. Following successful resolution of the Oedipus complex, the ‘normal’ child of both sexes will enter the genital phase, when “the pursuit of pleasure comes under the sway of the reproductive function” and “the sexual aim attached to some extraneous object” (1949/2011: 75). In later life, the ‘normal’ male will resolve the Oedipus complex by finding a maternal replacement for a wife, while the female will sate her desire for a penis with, variously, a paternal replacement figure, pregnancy, and babies.

The method of looking back to trace and deconstruct (in order to reconstruct) the roots of sexuality is an important legacy of Freud's analysis. Whereas the contemporary discourse of 'preference' seems to invoke self-evident fact - an immovable, intractable order of things - we have in psychoanalysis a method to unpick "what the heart wants" in terms of a subject's biography (as it unfolds always-already under the influence of the social). However, the accent placed on this biography and the subject's acquisition of identifications and object relations shifts within the *Three Essays*; in one prominent reading of Freud's account, objects only assume secondary importance, while the instinct/drive/libido (more on the differences below) is given precedence, formulated as a primary erotic wellspring. Laplanche (1970/1985) and Davidson (1987) note that the difference between instinct and drive is that the former has an intrinsic object (for normative accounts of sexuality contemporary with Freud, this would have been a member of the opposite sex²¹), while a drive has none such, rendering it ripe for perversion. Davidson argues that Freud, "decisively replaced the concept of the sexual instinct with that of the sexual drive 'in the first place independent of its object'" (54). In de-suturing the physical wellspring of sexuality – the drive – from its object, Davidson argues that Freud made a radical anti-normative move that implied there are no 'natural' objects of desire²². This not only provides a space to think about the varieties of homosexuality, but to go further and posit that the sexual drive can become attached to any object, suggesting an

²¹ At its most normatively rendered, the instinct would contain not only an object but an aim (e.g. to penetrate or be penetrated); it was another of Freud's radical moves to distinguish between 'object' and 'aim', suggesting that the former need not *logically imply* the latter. Thus a man's attraction to a woman doesn't logically necessitate the will to penetrate – the reverse may even be true, and thus we might even suggest that Freud anticipated the contemporary trend (still something of a *mindfuck* for all-too-many- "he must *really* be gay") for opposite-sex attracted males to be "pegged" or penetrated by a woman wearing a strap-on dildo.

²² Building on this insight, Laplanche and Pontalis also argue that by Freud's own terms, the sexual instinct is actually no such thing, and would be better formulated as a "drive": "It is clear", they assert, "that when Freud attempts to ascertain the point at which the sexual instinct emerges, this instinct (*Trieb*) appears almost as a perversion of instinct in the traditional sense (*Instinkt*) - a perversion in which the specific object and organic purpose both vanish" (1973/2006: 420). Elsewhere, Laplanche suggests that given this insight – that the sexual instinct (*Trieb*) has no innate or natural object – then the constellation of sexual desires for which psychoanalysis must account is an, "Enlarged sexuality: such indeed has been our focus since we moved from the sexual as a vital instinct to the sexual as a veritable universal perversion of the instinctual" (1970/1985: 27). I take this as further evidence of the inherent radicalism of psychoanalysis and its utility for queer formulations of sexuality.

entry point within psychoanalysis to think about the racialisation of 'desire as sexuality'.

While I instinctively resist the normative trajectories to which the Oedipus complex gives rise, I think it does some important work in helping us think about sexuality and its aetiology: what it provides is a narrative, albeit one specific to a time, place, and culture, that limns the process of re-rendering and reification by which desire becomes recast as "sexuality". Taking the Oedipus complex as an originary narrative of sexuality, and reflecting the position of psychoanalysis as what De Lauretis calls, "an effective discourse... a representation of the sexual that *has effects*" (1994: 291 [my italics]), I suggest the following as reasons for its enduring utility:

- 1) It provides an originary cluster of identifications with whole objects, which will prove pivotal to the subject's later object world and identifications- and by extension their desires and sexuality.
- 2) Through the taking up and induced abandonment of identifications within the Oedipus complex, we are drawn to think about the processes of introjection and incorporation, and the importance to desire of *loss*.
- 3) Oedipus highlights the importance of phantasy and the unconscious to 'desire as sexuality'.
- 4) It acknowledges that the majority of children are born into the sexual and affective matrix known as *the family*. In its industrial-capitalist incarnation, this means being born into a dyadic relationship that precedes - and in matters sexual - precludes the child. This is no less relevant in the case of single parents, where the absent parent can exist as a presence (at the very least in the mind of the caregiver, who can unconsciously transmit it the infant), and given that Oedipus is an intergenerational transmission (a term I employ here psychically rather than epigenetically), we are also prompted to acknowledge the parents' own imbrications in an Oedipal dynamic that they may have more or less "resolved".

- 5) The Oedipus complex contains the castration complex, amongst its most contested and especially for feminists – problematic – features. Privileging a metaphoric reading here and inspired by Mario Mieli’s²³ queer revision of the orthodox Freudian complex, I draw on Mieli’s concept of “educastration” (2002/2018). This shifts the emphasis from the anatomical fact of the penis to the presence and introjection of cultural injunctions. These in turn, I argue, become the “mental dams” referred to by Freud, and structure sexuality (often in unpredictable ways) according to cultural dictates. Importantly, psychoanalysis itself, as a “discourse with effects”, becomes part of the regime of educastration by which ‘desire *as* sexuality’ is shaped and governed; a dynamic I attest to at various points in what follows.

Using the Oedipus complex as a prompt, in the remainder of this chapter I explore these different aspects of the development of sexuality: identification, object relations and phantasy (with detours by way of the structures of desire and fetish). I read educastration (a queer concept I delineate in detail below) as the subject’s sexual interpellation into the social and as such it is the moment (condensed and crystalised for Freud [and Mieli, its author] in the Oedipus complex) at which desire becomes rendered *as* sexuality. Thus via educastration, I engage in the final parts of this chapter in a socio-cultural exploration of the concept of sexuality, defining the latter variously as a *social identity* and an *assemblage* with go towards constructing a foundational narrative-of-self for contemporary subjects.

²³ Although parts of Mario Mieli’s (1952-1983) work have been available in English translations, by and large they have not been engaged with by queer (or ‘quare’ or QOC) theorists, and the full text of his *Elementi di critica omosessuale* (1977) was not made available until a 2018 edition from *Pluto Press* (which does mark a clear entry into the queer theory mainstream, not least by virtue of the inclusion of a foreward from Tim Dean). Broadly speaking, Mieli fits into a Freud-Maxist tradition - aligning him more with theorists like Wilhelm Reich and Theodor W. Adorno than the post-Foucault, post-modernists of the queer theoretical canon. Despite this tendency, I would argue (after Dean) that Mieli’s work offers a rich source of material for anyone seeking a radical - and explicitly revolutionary - treatment of sexuality.

A brief note on *educastration* (Mieli, 2002/2018)

I now take a brief detour through Mieli's concept of *educastration* because it is vital to the way I frame the psychic inscription and the social saturation and organisation of 'desire as sexuality'. Mieli explicitly links the concept of *educastration* to the Oedipus complex, arguing that one of the ways it plays out is, "the social and family repression that forcibly leads the boy to identify with the father and renounce the male 'object', and the girl to identify with the mother and renounce the female 'object'" (2002/2018: 50). Rather than specifically pertaining to the destruction of the privileged sign of sexual difference – the penis, or the Phallus which it comes to signify – castration here is re-rendered as a repression of an erotic identification; "the object-choice that the son makes for the father is castrated, negated" (50). Elsewhere, Mieli describes "the work of *educastration*" more broadly as, "the influence on the individual of society and the 'external' world in which a monosexual Norm prevails"²⁴, and that this process is part of an intergenerational transmission of cultural injunctions, "transmitting the repression from generation to generation" (2002/2018: 12). The way in which I read *educastration* as concerning both cultural injunctions – the impingement of the social onto sexual desire – and the reification of desire into sexuality, is based on the following comment: "*educastration* tends above all else to negate the mental and biological hermaphroditism that is present in us all, in order to make the little girl into a woman and the little boy into a man according to the counterposed models of heterosexual polarity" (12). I might add that where Mieli like almost all queer theorists has failed to grapple with the importance of 'race', he has missed that part of the process of *educastration*, as it is rooted in White Western epistemologies, which seeks to make the little boy into a "White man" and the little girl into a "White woman". It is important say that the term *educastration* doesn't imply that desire or sexuality are amenable to educative injunctions in any linear or straightforward way. The presence in

²⁴ In fact, it seems to me that this "monosexual norm", the rendering of the original messiness of erotic desires as the surface-coherence of sexuality, motored by a will to specificity, order, and socio-cultural intelligibility, is the seat of sexuality's power and dysfunction.

the world of queers and queer sexualities – the starting point for Mieli’s own work – is testament enough to this resistance to *conscious* influence.

Crucially, eduction relates to the White Western episteme under which our contemporary categories of sexuality came into being (Thomas, 2007). I note that Mieli - anticipating Irigaray’s *The Sex That Is Not One* (1985) by some 8 years - argues that there is only one true sexuality, that of the straight (White) male, and that it is the job of eduction to bring all subjects into line with it: “Eduction consists... in the repression... of woman’s whole erotic existence. Female (trans)sexuality has to be violently repressed so that the woman can appear ‘feminine’, can be subjected to the male and to the insults inflicted on her by his sexuality, the ‘only one true sexuality’. On the basis of the Norm, female sexuality cannot exist except as something subordinate. It must not exist in and for itself, but only outside itself, for someone else” (2002/2008: 242).

Eduction also concerns psychic processes and structures of desire. It is a process predicated on repression - the repression of some desires within the unconscious²⁵, which means that other desires become privileged. This in turn, and in aggregate, leads to the feat of simplification by which a coherent, socially-intelligible sexuality is produced. Eduction is the process by which desire becomes fixed and alienates the very subject it is meant to constitute: “the homosexual, just like the heterosexual is subject to norms and values, the heritage of Oedipal phallogocentric eduction, and to the compulsion to repeat.” Sexuality has become, according to Mieli, “polarised by objects of desire in the literal sense, which restrict it²⁶, mutilate it, and channel it into the death-dealing orbit of the directives of capital, estranging it from the human being to

²⁵ Drawing on *The Ego and The Id*, Mieli also notes that Freud distinguishes between two types of unconscious repression: “we have two types of unconscious: the one which is latent but capable of becoming conscious, and the one which is repressed and which his not, in itself and without more ado, capable of becoming conscious” (1923/2001: 14).

²⁶ Mieli quotes another queer Italian author Corrado Levi, “The crystallising of desire onto acquired images tends to lead, and at times in an unambiguous way, to ruling out all other images that are different from these. Only certain images of man and woman are sought (whether heterosexual or homosexual), and we pursue physical types that we have associated with these images: young or old, blonde or dark, with or without a beard, bourgeois or proletarian, male or female etc.” (2002/2018: 246). As so often in White-authored texts, the glossing of ‘race’ here strikes as egregious!

turn it back towards the fetish, the stereotyped fantasy, the commodity” (2002/2018: 181-182). This quote in particular testifies to Mieli’s roots in Marxism, through which it is capitalism that is to blame for this estrangement of man from himself; the point at which I would suggest the subject’s desires become rendered *as* sexuality. Finally, eduction is also the process by which disgust enters the frame of sexuality, unleashing the mechanism of the *turn-off* to regulate ‘desire *as* sexuality’. Mieli gives the rather spectacular example of faeces to demonstrate this, whereby, “Eduction gives rise in us to a disgust for what had originally aroused great pleasure and interest: the taste of turds is transformed into the turd complex” (2002/2018: 155). Thus, as a term that captures the specifically sexual dimensions of the subject’s interpellation into the social and as an explicitly psychosocial formulation of the desiring subject, I find eduction indispensable for my own formulation of the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’.

Imbricating identity, desire, and sexuality: the uses of identification

In psychoanalysis, identification is a, “psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973/2006: 205). The abstract terminology here, “psychological process”, rests on a series of other processes, most especially those relating to internalisation, by which the external object is *taken into* the subject’s psyche. Also prominent are mimesis, and empathy, the process by which, through an “imaginative” projective identification, the subject comes to experience something of what it is like to be the other, while suffering “no loss of reality, no confusion of identity”, so leaving self-other boundaries intact (Bott Spillius et al. 2011: 321-322). In psychoanalysis, internalisation of the object of identification occurs one of two ways, via incorporation or introjection.

For the subject’s relationship with the object of identification – and by implication, for their desire *as* sexuality - the difference between these two is significant; incorporation involves the ‘taking in’ of a whole object that cannot be

digested, and thus cannot be acknowledged, or processed and made a useable part of the self; introjection however, involves a 'taking in' that acknowledges the object and the potential for (and in phantasy, the psychic reality of) loss, separation, and mourning, and a subsequent strengthening and solidification of the ego, combined with the ability to relate to the object as integral and independent of the self. Incorporations do nonetheless "cast a shadow" on the subject's ego, but the effects are unconscious, unknown, and disavowed, leading to ego fragility²⁷. Incorporation, following the model of taking in food, seems to be the original form of internalisation, the earliest way the infant takes in objects, and constitutes what Laplanche and Pontalis call the "corporeal model of... identification" (1973/2006: 211). Highlighting the ambivalence of incorporation as a form of identification, Laplanche and Pontalis argue that it has three meanings: (1) to obtain pleasure by making an object penetrate oneself; (2) to destroy the object; and (3) by keeping it within oneself to appropriate the object's qualities. Through the multiple meanings of incorporation we seem to find a clear indication for the eternal co-presence of love and hate. Introjection is defined less ambivalently as the process by which, "in phantasy, the subject transposes objects and their inherent qualities from the 'outside' to the 'inside' of himself" (1973/2006: 229), and crucially, this occurs without destroying or refusing the separateness of the object, however much of a challenge and a temptation such psychic (phantastical) manoeuvres may remain. The subject's incorporation and introjection of objects of identification are also the primary mechanisms by which the external, social world, is taken into the psyche, where it then operates according to the logic of the pleasure principle, by which everything the subject finds pleasurable is kept in and everything causing unpleasure is projected out.

²⁷ Abraham & Torok, who wrote a now classic text on internalisation, *The Shell and the Kernel* (1972/1994), write that, "incorporation results from those losses that for some reason cannot be acknowledged as such" (1972/1994: 130). The subject fantasises that the object has literally been swallowed whole and is contained within them ("the words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed – everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss"). Incorporation installs in the subject's psyche a "secret tomb" or "crypt", from which, "the unspeakable words never cease their subversive action" (1972/1994: 132). That is, while sequestered away from consciousness, incorporated objects nonetheless continue to exert significant influence on behaviour, and as I suggest below, become constitutive of later sexuality.

As rendered by Freud within the Oedipus complex, desire and identification are discrete processes. Identification with the father produces in the male desire for women and a replacement mother figure. Likewise, identification with the mother produces for the female child desire for men and a replacement father figure²⁸. Queer formulations of desire collapse this presumed dichotomy between the desire *to have* and the desire *to be* (Fuss, 1995; Butler, 1997; Muñoz, 1999). For example, in Sedgwick's (1985/2015) famous example of "homosocial bonds", identifications made between heterosexual men – their desire *to be* like each other – are always shot through with a disavowed desire *to have* each other. In this model, the women these men desire become both conduits for their desire for other men, and points of identification, in that they contain the feminine qualities and masquerade that some part of these men would also like *to be*. Conversely, amongst gay men, the trope of homogeneity - whereby men cultivate themselves into 'clones' according to an established standard of preened, gym-trained masculinity (one that might be read as a simulacrum of its straight-male inspiration) - almost completely collapses the distinction between the desires of 'having' and 'being' an object, at least at the surface scopic and physical (i.e. not necessarily at the psychic) level. Importantly, this consideration of identification operates strictly at the level of gender difference and similitude, and cannot therefore, account for the multiplicity of identifications put in play by the meeting of any two desiring subjects. Even before broadening the scope of identification to take in registers at the level of say 'race', class, and age, we might also comment that this example testifies to the dynamism of identification.

Whether *to have* or *to be*, identification explicitly draws together two key experiences of the human condition, those of how we relate to others, and how we come to constitute ourselves; for it is only through the former that we can take up the on-going challenge of the latter. In this vein, Diana Fuss provides a

²⁸ In point of fact, although Freud does indeed formulate desire and identification as discrete processes, in *The Ego and the Id*, his position is somewhat more nuanced, since he acknowledges that the identification with the same-sex parent that successfully resolves the Oedipus complex is a substitute for the forbidden object of desire (the self-same object of identification).

formulation of identification as “the detour through the other that defines a self” (1995: 2) and notes that it is from the beginning “a question of *relation*” (1995: 4). Through introjection and incorporation, the other exerts its influence; it is to this that Freud alludes with his famous formulation from *Mourning and Melancholia*: “The shadow of the object has fallen upon the ego” (1922: 11). In other words, the ego - that part of the psyche closest to ‘the self’ that we present to the world - is constituted in and through identifications with objects that become psychically proximate through internalisation. Frosh goes so far as to contend that, “It seems logically and empirically likely that identification might be the crucial psychological process out of which identity – including sexual and gender identity – is constructed” (1997: 234). Identification thus becomes the pre-eminent process and means of defining our identity, and in so doing we anchor a phenomenological apprehension of incoherence and amorphousness – an experience I frame in terms of the *hot mess* of the self - to the seemingly ‘whole’ external object.

The seeming *wholeness* of the external object (of desire), cast against a feeling of personal fragmentation, is framed within the British Object Relations tradition as a function of anxieties relating to loss, separation, and disintegration, which are formulated as fundamental to human experience and constitutive of subjectivity (Craib, 2001). Within the Lacanian tradition, this is framed in terms of *alienation*, which is likewise positioned as an unavoidable and foundational feature of subjectivity. Lacan suggested alienation was brought about by the subject’s need to mediate their relations with the world through the prism of language (and the Symbolic), and the consequent awareness that our own desires are always also the desires of the other. Fanon (1967) reformulated Lacan in the context of relations between coloniser and colonized, arguing that colonialism had rendered people of colour doubly alienated, since the ‘other’ through which they were forced to define themselves was saturated with the racist ideology of White supremacy, leaving no terrain on which Black subjects could construct themselves away from the White gaze (or as Oliver, building on Fanon, frames it: “It is precisely the sense of arriving too late to create one’s own meaning that makes the colonization of psychic space so effective” [Oliver: 2004: 15]).

According to Fanon, the double alienation for the Black subject is the universal alienation that grounds subjectivity to language and the strictures of the Symbolic, combined with the Black subject's denial of entry (certainly in any way that contains the potential for agency) into this Symbolic. Although always a matter of disciplining and regulation, interpellation into the Symbolic also offers the subject meaning-making devices through which to make sense of, and to which to anchor, the self; in the White supremacist Symbolic of occidental cultures these devices are always-already saturated with racism and the differential hierarchy of Man (Wynter, 2003). This double alienation could be formulated as a triple one for Black MSM negotiating White gay male culture; the latter manifesting a wilful blindness to 'race' while promoting itself as the only show in town for same-sex attracted men to make sense of themselves. To say this is not to deny the existence of Black queer, gay male, and other MSM cultures, but to emphasise the way such formations struggle to acquire Symbolic intelligibility outside the frames of dominant Whiteness.

Fanon's colonial scene also reminds us that identifications are not simply a matter of looking, loving, and mimicking; they can just as easily be a matter of fear, disgust, and disavowal; a cluster of emotions and psychic processes that we might think of as constituting the affective underbelly of desire. Butler (1997) draws on Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* to generate a formulation of "melancholic identification"; an identification that is made, incorporated, then disavowed under the weight of some external prohibition, remaining sequestered-away and undigested in the subject's unconscious. The effect of this as Butler notes is that, "melancholic identification permits the loss of the object in the external world precisely because it provides a way to preserve the object as part of the ego, and hence, to avert the loss" (1997: 134). Building on Butler, Fuss suggests that disavowed identifications are equivalent to "disidentifications", which she defines more specifically than Muñoz as, "an identification that one fears to make only because one has already made it" (1995: 7 [I think this formulation compliments Muñoz work, and notably that author references Fuss throughout *Disidentifications*, 1999]). Although buried from conscious thought, according to a psychoanalytic rendering, such

disidentifications will continue to manifest in the subject's feelings, desires, and behaviour towards others.

The introduction of disavowed and *dis-identifications*, illustrates the importance of qualifying and delineating the qualities of identifications. Fuss provides some interrogative prompts: "Are identifications conscious or unconscious? Active or passive? Immediate or belated? Creative or lethal?" (1995: 10). The answer seems to be: potentially all of the above. Freud provides some insight on the matter in *Group Psychology & the Analysis of the Ego*: "Identification in fact is ambivalent from the very first; it can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal" (1921/2012: 2). Thinking through the effects of cross-'racial' identifications, Fuss quotes Doris Sommer who warns that identification may lead to, "the ultimate violence... appropriation in the guise of an embrace" (Fuss, 1995: 9). Fuss' and Sommer's point here touches on the challenging question posed by Emmanuel Levinas, namely; "Is the Desire for the Other an appetite or a generosity? (1996: 52). On this matter, psychoanalysis seems equivocal. The taking of another as an object through identification might – even just by way of an irresistible linguistic (or Freudian) slippage - lend itself to a reading of identification as *objectification*. On this, Laplanche seems to assuage our concerns before reinstating them: "the Freudian Objekt is not opposed in essence to subjective being. No "objectification" of the love relation is intended". Several lines later he goes on, "And yet our caution against a vulgarized concept of the love object... should not be taken as an absolute" (1970/1985: 11). In other words, identifications don't necessarily lead to objectification, but they can do²⁹. In reflecting on the identifications of Robert

²⁹ For object relations psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1969), whether identification leads to objectification would depend on the quality of the object attachment itself. Object relating involves a relationship with an object that does not acknowledge its objective reality in the world. The subject struggles to acknowledge and integrate the object as an independent other, and its existence (for the subject) is limited to its place within the subject's psyche. Object use meanwhile, involves the integration of external reality and the feelings of frustration that are inevitably generated out of the subject's need to relinquish the fantasy of omnipotence over its objects. For Winnicott, the ability to 'use' objects is a developmental achievement that not all people acquire, while *all* subjects are likely to oscillate between using and relating to objects, as the seductions of psychic omnipotence retain their appeal. Another way of thinking about 'object use' is in terms of the psychic functionality of objects for the subject. For a racialised discussion of "the challenges of object use" see Lewis (*Feminist Review, in press*).

Mapplethorpe with his Black models (and partners), Kobena Mercer also offers a series of indicative questions that strike me as highly useful for reckoning with the stakes of desire, sexuality, and identification: “Under what conditions does eroticism mingle with political solidarity? When does it produce an effect of empowerment? And when does it produce an effect of disempowerment? When does identification imply objectification and when does it imply equality?” (1992: 23). The answers to these questions may not be one or the other, but both, suggesting in turn the potential for a foundational ambivalence which girds identification, desire, and sexuality.

Accenting the social and political stakes of identification, Fuss notes the “imperialising character of many cross-cultural identifications” (1995: 8) and drawing on the work of Fanon (1967) argues that “identification is never outside or prior to politics... identification is always inscribed with a certain history” (1995: 165). Identifications then, do not always occur on equal terms; are not arrived at from coeval subject positions. Rather, dimensions of ‘race’, gender, class, and sexuality mediate them. Identification is also the process by which these social registers of difference and similitude become internalised and psychically inscribed, signifying a double movement for ‘race’ in and through identification. Erotic desire may act as a legacy of colonialism both in its *content* – eroticised racial stereotypes – and by the *form* or *processes* – chiefly, I argue, identification – by which it is enacted. bell hooks reminds us how the erotic and cultural identifications that underlie “eating the other” may produce a form of exploitation that reinscribes and maintains the status quo. As she notes, “When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the cultures of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other” (1992: 23). The colonial dynamic is clearly reproduced (“with a distinctly postmodern slant” as hooks puts it), as the Other becomes a prop, a projection post, and, in the process, is denied recognition of their subjectivity. Yet, returning once more to Robert Mapplethorpe’s photography, Stuart Hall provides a reading which

underscores the complexity of this messy terrain: for Hall, “Mapplethorpe’s work is not exhausted by being able to place him as the white fetishistic gay photographer, and this is because it is also marked by the surreptitious return of desire – that deep ambivalence of identification” (1992: 256). Thus for Hall, desire *is* ambivalent identification - a formulation that can be read as psychoanalytic given its appreciation for the proximity of those twin obsessions, love and hate. If desire is inherently ambivalent, then it might also be described as *a problem*, especially where it intersects with ‘race’, which is also *a problem*. Together, desire and ‘race’ – rendered as I suggest, in the terms of sexuality - go to make an especially potent admixture, which amplifies the ambivalence circulating around them. I’m reminded again of Lewis’ (2009a) testimony of ‘transracial’ mothering and *daughtering*; the way it was defined, as all mother-daughter dyads are, by the co-presence – more and less accented at different times and places – of love and hate, but crucially then *also*, the way that in the context of a particular racial formation of post-war, de-colonising Britain, this love and hate could so easily (inevitably) become rendered in terms of another great ambivalence, ‘race’.

Racialised sexuality = structures of desire + structures of the social

Building on Winnicott’s work on object use and relating, Jessica Benjamin, a psychoanalyst and social theorist from the “relational school”, argues that the central challenge of identification is, “whether the self can actually achieve a relationship to an outside other without, through identification, assimilating or being assimilated by it”, (1995: 30). This point takes up a recurring theme in Benjamin’s work, namely difference and similitude and the relational dynamics of self and other, and it highlights that the challenge of guarding against assimilation is two-fold: as well as guarding against colonising another, the subject must also guard against being colonised in turn (an outcome that may hold significant psychic appeal). Difference and similitude might be said to constitute a *structure of desire*, a fulcrum around which both subjectivity and desire pivot. The crucial move here is from the realm of desire where the infant encounters their first experiences of difference through the realisation that the

primary carer is a separate, whole being and not a part of the self; this instantiates the difference and similitude as a structure of desire, which sexuality comes to re-render in terms of sexual difference, gender and 'race'. Directly addressing the significance of sameness and difference to racialised and classed desires, in the particular context of post-gay-lib era lesbian culture, Jackie Goldsby asks: "where, in the context of lesbian political discourse on race, can we acknowledge that our knowingly crossing boundaries of race and class *is* part of our desire for each other?" (1990: 11). The emphasis in Goldsby's quote attests to the taboo-busting that such a statement represents (in her article, Goldsby describes the social pressure and anxiety that prompts her and her partner to deny that 'race' plays any role in their desire for each, their trans-racial intimacy framed more acceptably in terms of happenstance). However, once this point is acknowledged, then the more crucial question becomes: is erotic desire for the racialised other a desire to assimilate and thus annihilate difference, or is it a desire that respects this difference and the integrity of other? In the psychoanalytic tradition of *both/and* rather than *either/or*, the answer may sometimes be both at once. For Benjamin, the key to negotiating sameness and difference lies in whether such boundary crossing can trouble the binary of 'like: not like', which structures intersubjective relations and dominant social categories of othering (race, gender, sexuality, class). In sum, what is the potential for the boundary crossings described by Goldsby to facilitate an appreciation for the *sameness in difference*; an appreciation that might go *some way* to unsettling the splitting – both psychic and social – in which our desires are currently deeply implicated?

Elsewhere, Benjamin links the challenges of the subject's differentiating without disavowing the other, to the erotics of sado-masochism and dominance/submission. Benjamin explicitly frames the appeal of domination/submission (on both sides) in terms of the challenges of differentiation ("The fantasy of erotic domination, the play with violence, is an attempt to relive an effort at differentiation that failed", 1983: 292). For Benjamin the subject's attempt to differentiate is mediated in contemporary Western cultures by a corresponding denial of dependency, which encourages

the differentiating subject to disavow and psychically sequester their vulnerability (another universal of the human condition). Benjamin suggests that we have seen a proliferation of forms of sexual violence as an attempt to compensate for the fact that in our increasingly atomised capitalist societies, the, “individualistic emphasis” on “strict boundaries between self and other” leads to feelings of “isolation and unreality”, producing a sensation of “numbness”³⁰ (1983: 282). And while the immediate object of analysis is S/M sexual relations, Benjamin broadens the scope of masochism from a definition purely in terms of pain to one in which it becomes a, “search for recognition of the self by another who alone is powerful enough to bestow this recognition” (1983: 286). I would also suggest that this reading of the broader symbolic dynamics of subjectivity at work in the structures of desire and erotic play is useful for thinking through how dominance/submission become rendered within sexuality. As the seat of the (eroticised) social, sexuality provides ready-made repositories of relations of dominance, submission, and recognition, via the power dynamics inherent to ‘race’ and gender as categories of difference and othering. As they play out between two subjects, these power dynamics provide erotic scripts, which may be played out straightforwardly or scrambled and *flip-moded*; but the crucial thing is that they flesh out the *content* of the *form* of desire. Thinking dialectically about the relationship between desire (as *sexuality*) and the social, the fact that ‘race’ and gender are structured in this way may be an attempt to generate a solution to the fundamental challenges of differentiation and recognition that Benjamin formulates as the tectonic plates undergirding the erotic³¹ (a dynamic I explore further below in relation to the work of Joel Kovel [1970/1988]).

³⁰ Benjamin adds that, “Violence acquires its importance in erotic fantasy as an expression of the desire to break out of this numbing encasement. The importance currently assumed by violent fantasy can in part be attributed to the increasingly rational, individualistic character of our culture” (1983: 282).

³¹ Where Benjamin appears to be largely pessimistic about the potential for dominance/submission dynamics to generate progress for the subjects involved, Darieck Scott is more optimistic about their scope for these dynamics to work *reparatively* for the two subjects involved. In an extended meditation on ‘transracial’ S/M (and with especial reference to the figure of the “black power bottom”) Scott suggests that even if two desiring subjects are explicitly engaged in a restaging of racialised historic traumas, the context in which this occurs – specifically one of mutual respect and intimacy – matters (2010: 234-235). While guarding against the suggestion that S/M can ever be truly revolutionary, he argues that it may empower individual subjects, quoting from David Savran’s *Taking It Like A Man*: “Without fundamentally altering the social structures that produce oppression, they perform a kind of psychic alchemy...

While S/M or dominance/submission represent one – seemingly popular – eroticised solution to the challenge that sameness/difference and differentiation pose to the subject, Benjamin nonetheless argues that a more effective and enduring one is to acknowledge dependence on the other and recognise the sameness in difference. And she suggests that there is in fact a model of identification through which we can acknowledge this sameness in difference, forming loving relationships with those with whom – according to the logics of some prominent register of the social – we consider ourselves the same, and those from whom we are ostensibly different. Benjamin locates this in the first instance within same- and cross- gender identifications formed within the family. Within this context of deep domestic intimacies, Benjamin argues that the effect of cross-gender identifications is precisely to elucidate points of sameness within difference, and thus to dilute the sense of a polar axis of ‘like: not-like’. For the subject this also involves a further challenge of permitting difference and sameness to *co-exist*. As Benjamin puts it, “the difficulty lies in assimilating difference without repudiating likeness” (1995: 106). For me, this also recalls Tate’s work (2015/2018) on the potential of ‘transracial’ intimacies to undo, through touch, proximity, and – as we might now put it – the consequent appreciation of *sameness in difference*. That sameness and difference may not be polar opposites but imbricated states of being is a psychically and socially challenging concept for the subject to grapple with. It might well rest on the structure of identifications, especially as they become *internalised* and *related to* in the subject’s object world and exposed to the vicissitudes of phantasy. Freud for instance – in *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915/2005) – discusses the “interchangeability of positions in fantasy”, which suggests the possibility of oscillation between poles, or even being in two places at once, precipitating a total collapse of polarised structures. This observation also mirrors queer formulations of identity as a site of “instability, mobility, oscillation and multiplicity” (Muñoz, 1999: 28). In chapter 5 I have attempted to read for this

and offer a genuine, if limited, sense of empowerment to subjects who, in many cases, have been denied power as social actors (David Savran, 1998: 232-233)”.

manoeuvre of *being in two places at once* across the transcripts of the research interviews.

This discovery of sameness in difference might also contribute to the way that our erotic desires and connections can so often generate change for the subject, a dynamic that might be experienced by the subject variously as welcome progress or the threat of annihilation. The definition of introjection above, which defines it as ‘healthy’ precisely insofar as it maintains a boundary between the self and internalized other, might also testify to liberal modernity’s reification of the individual, which we might in turn see as a kind of ideological blocker to recognizing the sameness in difference.

Objects & positions: stocking & structuring the subject’s ‘inner’ world:

Once objects are internalised, the place they are taken into is the subject’s dynamic inner object world. The influence of this inner object world and of the subject’s object relations on their sexuality has been the subject of much debate amongst psychoanalysts. As noted above, the psychiatric orthodoxy about instincts – including the sexual instinct – during the time that Freud was writing presumed that any instinct contained within it both its object and its aim (Davidson, 1987). In this way, heterosexual desire could be rendered in terms of a normative sexual *instinct* that was oriented towards a specific sexual object (a member of the opposite sex) and aim (reproduction), and any digressions from this norm thus comprised a perversion of the instinct. Freud suggested this orthodox view was the product of a perceptual error and that in the case of sexuality, the object and aim were merely “soldered” to the instinct.

This position is complicated somewhat by the same authors when they note that even the apparently autonomous self-love of autoerotism does in fact have an extraneous object, the earliest examples of oral autoerotism for example (the sucking of thumbs, toys, bits of fabric, seen so commonly in babies) mirroring the child’s relation to the maternal breast (“On the contrary, he (Freud) shows that the drive *becomes* auto-erotic only after the loss of the object” [italics in original

text]; Laplanche & Ponatlis: 1968: 16). However, this rereading does not necessarily reintroduce a constitutional orientation towards an object, and most importantly, it requires that we distinguish between two types of object that exist concurrently. The first is what Laplanche (1970/1985) calls the object of the instinct (in the case of the breast, this is milk), and the second is the object of the sexual drive (the fantasmatic breast), the two objects linked in the infant's psyche through a relationship of "displacement" and "contiguity". Objects then, exist symbolically in chains of "associative connections" (34). In this way argues Laplanche, the presence or otherwise of an object for the sexual instinct becomes nuanced: "on the one hand there is from the beginning an object, but... on the other hand sexuality does not have, from the beginning, a real object" (1970/1985: 19). Expanding on this insight, Laplanche (after Freud) emphasises the diphasic character of sexuality, suggesting it comes in two, linked but distinct, phases, which I think is crucial for apprehending the ways that social categories come to inflect and constitute 'desire *as* sexuality'. In the first phase, "sexual excitation" is introduced to the infant through "the seduction of maternal care" (33), but this cannot be digested and made meaningful *as sexual excitation* until the arrival of sexuality's second wave, which arrives with the onset of puberty. Thus, all sexual meanings only appear *retrospectively*, when the adolescent hits puberty and has the chance to make sense of them as such. Laplanche argues that the effect of this is often disastrous for human sexuality, because puberty comes too late, "to allow him (the sexual subject) to assimilate the sexual scene and understand it" (43). Laplanche here seems to be suggesting a subject who has from birth been receiving and apprehending stimuli that they could not fully apprehend, but which nonetheless resonate and leave their mark. In addition to the sensual traces of maternal care, I would suggest that this framework could also describe the child's experience of 'race', gender, class and sexual difference, the sexual aspects of which it can only fully come to understand after a long period of latency when puberty allows these to be rendered in terms of sexuality. Each one of these categories of social difference and othering is saturated with historically-determined sexualised significations, but it is only later, when simultaneously, the subject comes under the sway of the discourse of sexuality, which forces on them binary choices, definitions, and an

anxiety-driven regulatory regime, that the subject is properly able to apprehend these. As such, I argue that 'race' is foundational to the construction and regulation of this sexuality³².

Returning to Laplanche's diphasic model, we might also posit that all later (racialised, gendered) erotic objects have undergirding them an earlier object relation (one that concerns, say, the primary scene of maternal care), but by a series of psychic displacements and associative chains between objects, the erotic charge attached to this first scene is transcribed into the later ones. Another way of saying this might be that regardless of socially-ascribed significations, for individual subjects, the *signifier* – say 'race' or a particular racial formation for present purposes – is for any one subject, overdetermined by its relationship to what is *signifies* in the subject's object realm. Thus, as always with 'race', we have a double manoeuvre: the significance of racialised object attachments is doubly overdetermined by the way 'desire *as* sexuality' is made to matter for the individual subject *and* by the socio-cultural overdetermination of 'race' as a site of meaning-making. Laplanche and Pontalis define displacement in terms of ideas (which psychically-speaking are, in themselves, objects) according to the following formulation: "the fact that an idea's emphasis, interest or intensity is liable to be detached from it and to pass on to other ideas, which were originally of little intensity but which are related to the first idea by a chain of associations" (1973/2006: 121). By this definition, we can see how 'race', which originally means nothing to desire, can come to be erotically meaningful – and useful – as it is rendered as sexuality. While the object or idea of displacement (the thing onto which the displacement occurs) might be random, the preponderance of sexual difference, gender, and 'race' in desire is a function of their social salience; although they might not have

³² Crucially, I think the ways in which 'race' is foundational to sexuality differ from 'gender', not least because the latter is presented as an all-or-nothing binary, and the former as a hierarchy – although of course, it might also be framed more or less in terms of "sameness: difference" e.g. "White: not White". Nonetheless, notwithstanding that gendered fluidity *is* possible, it appears a relatively rarity, which in turn contributes to the sense that gay/straight are organic states. The potential for particular racialised identifications to become more or less accented and important to the subject's 'desire *as* sexuality' suggests by contrast, a relatively greater potential for fluidity throughout the life course. This course could indeed be framed as another way in which 'race' is inherently *queer*.

mattered to the individual subject concerned, they matter greatly to the society into which this subject is interpellated. That 'race' and gender at the level of social signification are also overdetermined by accumulated erotic meanings can be viewed as evidence of a kind of genealogical sedimentation occurring over time, buttressed by the sexualities of succeeding generations.

Freud provides an example of the way psychic energy moves along associative chains of objects, invoking: "A soldier (who) will sacrifice himself for a piece of coloured cloth on a pole [i.e. something quite extraneous: a flag], because it has become the symbol of his native country" (quoted in Laplanche, 1970/1985: 36). As Laplanche notes, "the symbolized term has evacuated its entire charge, the whole of the affect it provokes, into what symbolizes it" (37). With this in mind and thinking psychosocially, the racialised object may again be *doubly overdetermined*, on one hand by the socially-ascribed significations of 'race' and particular racialised formations and on the other by the imbrication of the racialised object into the (racialised) subject's inner object world. This model also provides a basis for the associative link, suggested by B. Ruby Rich and referenced in chapter 1, between 'race' and gender as sexual objects, wherein 'race' can come to stand in for gender. Already deeply imbricated at the level of culture, within the subject's psyche, I argue that these may become interchangeable terms, particularly so in the case of same-sex couples, in which gender difference is often either less pronounced or denied³³.

In referring to racialised objects from the point of view of psychoanalysis, it becomes important to note that such objects may not be whole, but part, objects. This idea originates with Melanie Klein (1935/1998; 1957/1997), according to whom the infant's development is structured by its initial inability to apprehend whole objects. For example, the maternal carer is not apprehended as a whole, integral person but rather becomes fragmented into component parts or part objects with which the infant interacts – the breast that nourishes, the hands that

³³ I would argue this denial or playing-down of gender difference is much more the case in gay male culture, where the default dynamic is "masc4masc" and there is no mainstream equivalent of the butch-femme dynamics that have been a prominent - if contested - feature of lesbian and queer female cultures.

clean and stroke, the voices that soothe. These part objects are then internalised and related to, and it is the infant's attachments to these part objects that form the very earliest types of object relation. Tim Dean (2009: 145-176) uses this as a starting point to think about the fact that the realm of desire (as opposed to sexuality) may not even pertain to whole objects, but rather to part ones. He suggests that even as desire becomes rendered *as* sexuality, the importance of part objects endures so that rather than being about whole people, our desires are often driven by parts of the whole.

An example of this might be found in that question, often posed to straight men, "Are you a legs or a boobs man (and, reflecting the influence of culture on sexuality, it's now more likely to be "boobs or *bum* man" – a highly racialised³⁴ shift to boot)?" Of course, these part objects are gendered and therefore highly-socio cultural *signs* but they also limn the fact that the hook for erotic desire may not be the integrity of the individual subject, but the arch of their back, or the nape of their neck. Gender itself (and by extension, at the level of erotic desire at least, 'race') might even be thought of as a constellation of part-objects. This certainly gives us one way to think anew about the phenomenon of fetish (that I explore in more depth below), and about that recurring racialised trope of the "BBC"³⁵, which is explained, but perhaps not exhausted, with reference to the endurance of colonial stereotypes and tropes.

The developmental movement from part to whole objects, from object fragmentation to integration, is framed by another of Klein's major contributions to psychoanalysis (and one I suggest can also be fruitful for thinking about

³⁴ I suggest that this is racialised because it marks a racialised reformulation of the implicitly (given the mainstream British context to which I am referring here) White woman's 'ideal' body – a body culturally celebrated for its slenderness (represented here by slender, shapely, always-smooth legs) and associated with the immortal line "does my bum look big in this" – to incorporate aspects – in the present context, we could say *part objects* – of an idealized/stereotypical woman of colour, and more especially, Black woman's, body. As the case of Saartje Baartman makes clear this bum has also been a highly racialised site of pathologisation of Black women (Gilman, 1985; Arnfred, 2005).

³⁵ "BBC" is a widely recognised acronym for "Big Black Cock", common in highly sexualised online settings (e.g. see Craigslist [RIP] or www.BarebackRT.com) and in porn. Underlining the racist stereotype at its root, equivalent acronyms for other racial and ethnic groups, such as "BWC", are not widely used or recognised.

‘desire as sexuality’); namely, her formulation of psychic “positions” (Klein, 1927, 1946, 1957). The first of these, the *paranoid-schizoid* position, comes about when the infant, finding itself unable to control the appearance and withdrawal of the nourishing maternal breast, internalises it so that it becomes an internal (part) object. The internal (phantasy) and external (material) breast are independent entities but inextricably linked in the mind of the infant. These two breasts *that are one* roughly equate to Laplanche’s earlier distinction between the object of the instinct (the material breast) and the object of the sexual drive (the phantasmatic one). Owing to the mother’s inevitable inability to sate the child’s every need at the moment it arises, the child develops an ambivalent relationship to the internal, phantasy breast. Being psychically unable to integrate the complexity of an object that is sometimes good and sometimes bad, the infant temporarily resolves this complexity by entering into the paranoid-schizoid “position” (a fluid state of being), and in the realm of phantasy “splits” the object into a good breast and a bad one; the good breast sates the child’s appetites on command, while the bad breast is neglectful and insufficiently attentive to the infant’s needs. This bad breast can then be attacked in phantasy, without the attendant anxiety of destroying the generous and nourishing good breast, which also sustains the infant’s fantasy of omnipotence. However, as a consequence of this dynamic, the psyche becomes organised around a split between good and bad, the ego itself is split, and the infant manifests an inability to tolerate ambivalence and ambiguity (the stuff, that is, of real, rather than phantasy, life). The depressive position marks the next stage of development, at which the infant can begin to integrate good and bad (facilitated by the phantasmatic integration of the good and bad breast, and of the good and bad parts of the ego), although crucially this integration remains a challenge for all subjects throughout the life course. Positions are not so much resolved once and for ever then, as oscillated between, as the psyche’s tectonic plates shift according to the vicissitudes of the subject’s experiences in the world and their ph/fantasy life.

It strikes me that the paranoid-schizoid position in particular provides a very useful heuristic for thinking about the psychosocial organisation of sexuality, which so often seem to pivot around clearly demarcated poles (homo/hetero)

and an intersecting binary of seduction and disgust. Disgust appears to be a permanent background feature of sexuality as Freud (1949/2011) and after him Dollimore (2000) note. This is manifest in the splitting of idealised objects; the appetite with which objects of desire are pursued having as its inverse the repugnance inspired by contemplating sexual acts with an undesirable other. Dollimore also gives a provocative example where the presence of erotic desire and disgust, love and hate, seem much more proximate: "It remains the case that the sexuality of some straight men is organized around not just a barely concealed contempt for, but also a fundamental disgust with, women. Crudely, they fuck them despite – or because of – not much liking them" (2000: 370-371). Although this depicts a picture of an unreconstituted masculinity predicated on misogyny – a type of masculinity for which, in any case, there remains abundant evidence - this latter formulation in particular, of men who fuck women *because* they dislike them, prompts us to think about the relationship to 'desire as sexuality' of love and hate, with the latter two seeming to turn, at times, on a knife-edge. Conversely, a desire/sexuality that pivots on the logic of the paranoid-schizoid position might generate love for one object with an intensity mirrored by the hatred reserved for its "opposite", according to the logic of a socially salient binary e.g. (of course) 'race'. This seems pertinent to the way racialised identifications give way to racialised 'desire as sexuality': it could help explain the dynamic whereby erotic desires for one 'race' are underwritten by disgust at the idea of sex or romance with a person of another 'race'; it could explain as well the dynamic wherein say a White subject who is anti-Black can seek out Black people as potential partners, especially when the encounter is restricted to the sexual arena. As referenced earlier, some Kleinian theorists such as Michael Rustin (1991) argue that racism itself works according to the psychic logic of the paranoid-schizoid position, where the idealised and denigrated become racialised for the White racist as: white: black; me: not me. The paranoid-schizoid position implies not just splitting of good and bad, but also an inability to tolerate nuance and a rigidity of psychic structure that favours certainty. We can speculate perhaps that such a psychic structure would find an appeal in racialised ways of organising the world, including racialised sexual stereotypes, which split the world into types, *fix* the subject and object firmly in

place, and sustain an appealing organisation of the world into binaries. Since, according to Klein, every subject oscillates back and forth between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, we would also then need to grapple with the fact that such a way of seeing the world might hold an appeal for *all* subjects, at one time or another.

I want to finish this section by thinking in a more granular way about the question of how 'race' works in and through identifications and object relations, and consequently 'desire *as* sexuality'. I suggest three possible responses, which aren't necessarily discrete formations. In the first instance, an originary (part or whole) object – the primary carer say – may become re-rendered in terms of 'race' as the subject re-renders their desire in terms of the social *as* sexuality. This process may be supported by other identifications and object relations, which amplify the erotic importance of 'race' for the subject. Such amplification occurs through the second route by which I suggest 'race' gets into desire, which is through displacement, via which 'race', which may originally have held little interest or investment for the subject, becomes a highly loaded site of meaning-making. The qualities of a particular racialised desire would also vary depending on whether identification proceeded by incorporation or introjection. In the first case, incorporation may give rise to the kind of repetition-compulsion that seems to structure, for example, Robert Mapplethorpe's frantic desire for, and idealisation of, Black men³⁶. In the second case, introjection could lead to a more sophisticated relationship with the racialised object - and consequently 'race' - without the dangers of idealisation and its obverse, denigration.

A third way in which 'race' might work through identification, object relations – and by my formulation then, 'desire *as* sexuality' – is suggested by Eng and Han's work on racial melancholia, which proceeds within an explicitly Kleinian frame.

³⁶ In terms of thinking about the way the racialised object may become overdetermined by its association with other, earlier (part or whole) objects, it is notable that in the 2016 Mapplethorpe documentary (Bailey & Barbato, 2016), the observation is made by friends of Mapplethorpe that his desire for Black men arrived later in his life and split his sexual life in two: where once he appeared to be agnostic about the racialised identities of his prospective partners, once he had settled on a particular formation of African American masculinity, his sexuality became fixed and thereafter he showed no interest in partnering with men who did not fit this profile.

After Butler's formulation of disavowed and (un)mourned homosexuality³⁷ (1997) - Eng and Han prompt us to think through how the marginalisation of Blackness, and its compulsory disavowal by a racist society, leads to disavowed racialised identifications and objects, which may produce a kind of racial melancholia, affecting both people of colour and Whites alike. For Eng and Han, the incorporation of 'race' as a melancholic identification and object relation is predicated on the way White supremacy incapacitates Asian immigrants to the United States from acknowledging and building a positive relationship with their 'race'. Rather, Asian subjects in the US find the overwhelming emphasis (for non-Whites) is on suppressing racial difference and integrating to a model of White-supremacy-enabling "colour-blindness" (Bonilla-Silva, 2002/2010). Eng and Han suggest that the melancholic identifications and object relations of first generation immigrants become a trans-generational inheritance for each successive generation of Asians in America. Elsewhere, Eng (2001) has also explicitly linked these melancholic racial identifications to the erotic object choices of Asian subjects; a dynamic that may be especially pertinent to the dynamic in gay male culture explored in chapter 1, whereby there is a common perception that Asian men predominantly seek to partner with White men, and/or dismiss the possibility of partnering with other Asian men.

Fantasy & the Unconscious

Mediating both identifications and their object relations is phantasy³⁸. It is in and through phantasy that psychic life acquires its richness and textures, producing excesses of meaning in the subject's relations with the world. Laplanche and Pontalis call phantasy, "the fundamental object of psychoanalysis" (1968: 7).

³⁷ In which the highly instructive example is given of the archetypal American male "jock" figure whose female and homosexual identifications are incorporated and so, undigested, lie sequestered in his unconscious, from where they nonetheless exert their influence on his erotic desires, such as when he fucks the woman "I wouldn't be caught dead being".

³⁸ Again I draw attention to the fact that following the Kleinian convention, I use "phantasy" to denote unconscious activity, whilst "fantasy" is reserved for its conscious correlate. I note as well Laplanche and Pontalis' point that we should not be too emphatic about the distinction between these two spheres of mental activity, although I think it is important to emphasise the scope and scale of phantasising of which the subject is not consciously aware, since this is a psychoanalytic insight (or construct) with massive implications for how we can think about desire and/as sexuality.

Both through the infant's own mental functioning and experience of the world, and through the imposition on/in-to the child of the parents' fantasies ("We should accustom ourselves to the idea that the meanings implicit in the slightest parental gesture bear the parents' fantasies" [Laplanche, 1970/1985: 45]), phantasy is also a fact of psychic life from the very beginning. Elucidating the importance of phantasy for the subject's experience of the world, Laplanche notes that, "there is no "indication of reality" in the unconscious, so that it is impossible to distinguish between truth and emotionally-charged fiction ("i.e. between truth and fantasy; here we encounter one of the cornerstones of Freudian theory; in the unconscious, there is no "indication of reality" allowing one to distinguish a "real" memory from pure and simple imagination" [1970/1985: 38]). Thus in the psyche, a fact is a flexible thing, and Hook extends this point further, arguing that: "Fantasy indeed is 'more real than reality', at least in the sense that it is only *through fantasy* that what is taken to be reality is accessed in the first place" (2005: 16). Ph-/fantasy can occur at the conscious and unconscious levels, taking the form of (inter alia) daydreams (conscious), night dreams (potentially available to consciousness and mediating the conscious and unconscious), and unconscious phantasies about which the subject may remain permanently 'unaware' (remembering that Freud distinguishes two depths of unconscious, one totally out of reach and the other – the *preconscious* – hovering just below consciousness, forever threatening to intrude). In the Kleinian tradition there is clear delineation between unconscious phantasy, and conscious fantasy; conversely Laplanche & Pontalis (1968) argue that we should not overemphasise the distinction between the two. I emphasise both concepts here, because as well as the unconscious activity associated with them in the psychoanalytic tradition, 'desire *as* sexuality' appears to be an especially rich site for the generation and iteration of conscious fantasies. Thinking through the phantasy/fantasy split in terms of my own racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' framework, I would suggest that phantasy relates more to the realm of freewheeling *desire*, which in dreams, for example, can construct phantasy sexual scenarios with all manner of objects; fantasy, by contrast, would concern those more conscious erotic day dreams, which tend to correspond overwhelmingly with the manifest and accented content of our *sexualities*.

Writing in the (queer revisionist) Freudian tradition, De Lauretis provides a highly psychosocial formulation of ph-/fantasy, arguing that, “The instincts, their objects, and their vicissitudes are overdetermined by fantasies at once social and subjective” (1994: xii). De Lauretis adds later that, “It is through fantasy that the drives become properly sexual, in the psychoanalytic sense, and hence it is only through fantasy that desire is sustained” (1994: 83). And on this the Kleinians would agree, or at least Soto-Crespo, as he notes of Klein’s formulation of sexuality (2000: 193): “First sexuality is formed *through* phantasy, and second, phantasy is circumscribed by loss.” In the first instance then, much of the work of sexuality is achieved through phantasy, that is to say, the dynamic interplay of internalised objects at the unconscious level (of which conscious sexual fantasies perhaps only ever provide a residue). Secondly, this quote draws our attention back to the importance of loss on the psychic processes of identification, object relations and ph-/fantasising. Loss is an unavoidable feature of human life; the lost object may or may not return, but the fact of losing or being forced to give things up is present from the moment any subject encounters reality and is, in fact, an inherent part of adjustment to the so-called ‘reality principle’. Crucially though, as Marcuse argues in *Eros and Civilisation* (1955/1987), phantasy is an aspect of psychic life that doesn’t come under the sway of the reality principle, but operates entirely under the auspices of the pleasure principle; thus even as reality and the social world are internalised and reworked in phantasy, this is according to the logic of another psychic law in which the regulations and restrictions of the ‘real world’ need not apply.

Supporting the reign-supreme of the pleasure principle, in phantasy, losses can be compensated for through defences such as splitting (explored below), the idealisation or devaluation of objects, and disavowal and repression, amongst others. Loss elucidates a core function of ph-/fantasising then in the degree to which ph-/fantasy must work overtime making up for the inevitable frustrations of the external world. For example, as in the case of melancholic identifications discussed above (Butler, 1990, 1997; Fuss, 1995), it may be precisely through the mechanism of unconscious phantasy that an incorporated object can be

sustained and a loss disavowed as *not a loss at all*. This may then facilitate the double behaviours of keeping the lost object alive and well, present and correct in the realm of phantasy, and at the same time trigger behaviours like repetition compulsion that we see unfold as recurring structure of desire than then becomes rendered *as* sexuality.

Ph-/fantasy at all levels of consciousness seems to be the privileged site at which the social and cultural is psychically inscribed and made meaningful to the subject, hence its importance for the racialisation – and the gendering – of ‘desire *as* sexuality’. Sedgwick argues that, “Sexual fantasy is at once highly sociological and highly psychological – a “representational field”” (1997: 422). This captures the fact that sexual fantasy concerns elements both general and particular, drawing in material and meanings from the external world – the archetypal fantasies of colonialism we might say – and reworking these meanings for the individual. It is therefore also both highly general and highly particular. De Lauretis captures this dynamic, reminding us that sexual fantasy is always pulling in new material to rework itself and, “As the new material includes events and representations occurring in the external world, one may add that fantasy is the psychic mechanism that governs the translation of social representations into subjectivity and self-representation, and thus the adaptation or reworking of public fantasies into private fantasies” (1994: 285). De Lauretis thus positions, “fantasy as that which links the subject to the social through sexuality” (1994: 308). This is crucial, as it indicates that sexuality is *the* privileged site at which the *psychosocial* subject is brought into being and that fantasy is *the* privileged mechanism through which this is achieved. In turn, in White supremacist societies in which ‘race’ *matters*, the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’ could therefore also be rendered a pre-eminent terrain on which the subject is imbricated in – and thus simultaneously constituted by – the social. This argument throws into particular relief the gaping absence of detail regarding the social and its contents from strictly psychoanalytic formulations of sexuality; an absence I attempt to address below through an extended consideration of the influence of culture through *educastration*.

It is also in fantasy that the associative chains of objects discussed above can form their symbolic links, which cluster objects and generate shifts of both symbolic significance (e.g. how 'race' might move between a cluster of racialised objects) and psychic energy (the quantity of cathexes invested) between them. Butler makes the case for the mobility of the signifier in *The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary* (1993; 28-57), where she argues that the Phallus as a signifier of desire is an idealization, and thus a transferrable or appropriable property: "The displaceability of the Phallus, its capacity to symbolize in relation to other body parts or other body-like things, opens the way for the lesbian Phallus, an otherwise contradictory formulation" (1993: 84). In this way, the Phallus – by which Butler, in the Lacanian tradition, means not the penis itself, but the cultural archetype of it – could well come to be symbolized in other ways, in this case for example, in the figure of the masculine woman (a figure, incidentally, who also provides the primary inspiration for De Lauretis' *The Practice of Love* [1994]) and the accoutrements, psychic inscriptions, and corporeal performances (the habitus in *Bourdieuian* terms), that go to make up the drag of (always-already racialised of course!) masculinity.

Reformulating ('racial') fetish

When racialised sexualities are parsed outside of academia, it is often framed in terms of what I would call the 'fetish discourse'. Although fetish is a psychoanalytic concept, the fetish discourse contains only parts of the original; the discourse is meant to signify a singular, perverse desire for one particular feature (rather than the totality) of a person, and often with the implication that it necessitates a denial of the dignity and subjectivity of the object of desire. It is often also applied in a way that pathologises the fetish and the 'fetishistic' desiring subject, which, for example, prompted the very defensive invocation of (and against) fetish during one of my research interviews (see Anthony, Case Study 2). Here I attempt to grapple with the original psychoanalytic formulation of fetish, working with queer revisionists of Freud to think about whether fetish might in fact yield more universal insights about the nature of desire and its rendering *as* sexuality.

Freud discusses *Fetishism* in both his article of the same name (1927/2006: 90-95) and in a subsection of the *Three Essays* (1949/2011: 30-34). For Freud, the fetishist (who he explicitly genders as male) is a desiring subject who has been traumatised by the sight of his mother's vagina; a trauma that prompts this subject's entry into the so-called "castration complex"³⁹. Fetish then represents one possible resolution of this complex, wherein the subject invents (in phantasy) a maternal phallus, in order to restore the wholeness of the mother and assuage his own disintegration anxieties. This phantasy operates according to the seemingly contradictory (but psychically ordinary) dynamic of simultaneous disavowal and acknowledgement ("he both retains the belief [of a maternal phallus] and renounces it" [Freud, 1927/2006: 91]; another instance – as in identification – where by means of psychic oscillation, the subject can be in two places at once. The maintenance of this contradictory state of affairs requires the investment of a significant quantity of psychic energy, which Freud suggests can then become reinvested in another object, the fetish (we see again how energy becomes displaced between objects, creating the potential for the socially-salient – 'race', gender – to become overinvested and overdetermined at the point at which desire is rendered *as* sexuality). A fetish has become a full-blown perversion according to Freud when it, "becomes detached from a particular individual and becomes the sole sexual object" (1949/2011: 33). The dynamic of fetishes with their particular psychic charge renders them a type of desire that Freud described - in implicit contradistinction, it seems, to some unnamed, less pathological formation - as fixed, rigid, and doomed to incessant repetition.

Since fetishes usually appear later in life than the arrival of the castration complex, we can see this as another example of the way that erotic desires retroactively re-render the subject's early experiences, making a space for a desire that is mobile and a sexuality (anchored to the social) that tries to fix it in place. While the castration complex may seem somewhat regressive and limiting,

³⁹ I only have space to note in passing the extensive feminist critiques and debates that this aspect of Freudian theory has generated. For further discussion see Segal, L. (1994), chapter 4.

reducing desire – as in the classic renditions of the Oedipus complex⁴⁰ – to a matter of the presence or absence of the penis, it can also be read metaphorically as instantiating a fear of loss and disintegration. The co-presence in Freudian fetish of contradictory beliefs and the psychic energy required to sustain these also provides an interesting point of departure for thinking about the non-rational laws of (sexual) ph/fantasy and the affective intensity of erotic object cathexes. Nonetheless, while the psychic structures may well pertain, it is clearly impossible to theorise racial fetish in a cultural vacuum, as Freud does in the case of his analysis of fetishes for particular body parts. A fetish for hands for example, is clearly of a materially different order to fetishizing ‘race’, which before its internalisation and re-signification by the desiring subject is always-already overdetermined by socio-historical discourses and representations (in order not to repeat Freud’s error it is also worth pondering that in this racist world, every hand is also, *always-already*, a racialised object). In this sense, racialised objects may in fact be particularly attractive and amenable objects of fetish, especially if the goal of fetish is distraction from some originary trauma (castration, or the broader fear of loss, disintegration, and lack that it signifies). The amenability of ‘race’ to fetish may also be explained by the prolific circulation of stereotypes around the former, which generates a double emphasis on *fixity*, recalling Kobena Mercer’s formulation of the racial stereotype as that which seeks to create, “a fixed way of seeing that freezes the flux of experience” (1987: 436). The double movement towards fixity suggests that –as with the inherent ambivalence of identification – there is a complementarity between desire and ‘race’, which becomes manifest in the rendering of ‘desire *as* sexuality’.

Furthermore, if fetish is indeed anchored to a wider fear of disintegration and loss, then it is likely far more prevalent a structure of desire and aspect of sexuality than is commonly apprehended. In fact, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the projection and limitation of pathological fixity on/to fetish

⁴⁰ As De Lauretis notes (1994: 227), Chasseguet-Smirgel offers an alternative to this classic rendition, predicating fetishism on pre-Oedipal “separation anxiety and the inability to renounce primary identification with the mother”.

suggests that Freud may have been avoiding an uncomfortable broader truth about 'desire *as* sexuality'.

The work of Tim Dean suggests that fixity as a structure of desire is in fact more accurately a structure of desire *as it becomes sexuality*. While I think this observation is mediated by the potential that fetish rests on an incorporated object relation – a structure of desire, which then finds an outlet through sexuality – Dean's work nonetheless takes a crucial stride toward de-pathologising the figure of the fetishist. Shifting the pathologising lens back onto society, Dean accents the latter's attempts at fixing desire under the aegis of *normalisation*. Capturing something highly pertinent to this project about the ways the subject's desires come to rest on quite specific objects, Dean argues: "normalization itself is what's pathological, since normalization "fixes" desire and generates the exclusiveness of sexual orientation as its symptom. From this perspective, exclusive homosexuality and exclusive heterosexuality are equally problematic, in that both constrain the mobility of desire, orienting it in increasingly limited ways – first toward persons, then toward persons of the opposite sex, then toward specific sexual acts with persons of the opposite sex, and often towards specific acts with a specific person of the opposite sex" (2000: 236). Proffering a formulation of desire as mobile and sexual orientation as the socio-cultural process that fixes it in place, sexuality here emerges as a technique of normalisation, with normal here rendered broadly in terms of form rather than (necessarily) content. Dean's argument strikes me as supporting my own position that the construction of a sexuality marks the subject's eroticisation of, and erotic interpellation into, the social. Dean's quote also prompts us to think about the layers of sexuality, which may proliferate through time. To take the contemporary gay male subject as an example: first he is encouraged to interpret his same-sex desires through the heuristic of the homo/hetero binary (the increasing prominence of bisexuality and other more fluid categories notwithstanding); thereafter he will be encouraged to decide if he is a 'top', a 'bottom', or 'versatile' (all of which are techniques of fixity and normalisation, and reifications of sexual acts into sexual identities); and beyond that he will be prompted to consider his tribe, "twink", "bear", "leather". Here I would argue that

the racialised identity or identities of potential partners mark another layer of the immobilisation of 'desire as sexuality'. Extending this argument to think about the ways new technologies such as Grindr contribute to this process, I'm struck by the degree to which the mere demand Grindr makes to name a sexuality becomes in turn a way of producing it. Add to this the scope that 'filter' functionalities provide to restrict the Grindr profiles a given user views along lines of age, height, ethnicity, sexual position etc., along with the scripted nature of many Grindr conversations ("what are you into?"; "what are you up for?"), which delimit the range of possibilities of what might unfold before any IRL encounter has actually taken place, and it becomes irresistible to view hook-up and dating apps as startlingly efficacious technologies of normalisation which further encourage sexuality on its way, as it renders desire in terms of fixity and particularity.

Factoring the role of cultural normativity: queer challenges

Given my own formulation of sexuality as re-rendering of desire within the social, the fact that psychoanalysis traditionally takes up sexuality as a natural fact – rather than socio-culturally co-constructed - is a problem. In fact, critical engagement with the specifics of society and culture is absent from most of the canonical psychoanalytic texts and accounts of sexuality. Freud makes reference to "dams" (disgust, shame and morality), which act as regulating forces upon the libido and sexual development, but these are positioned as epigenetic markers of our biological inheritance (or "inherited memory traces"; Laplanche & Ponatalis [1968:10]). The sexual strictures of society find support in these dams, but for Freud, they do not instigate them, so reducing the influence of the socio-cultural⁴¹. This is one, important, reason why psychoanalysis requires other bodies of theory to sharpen the depth and criticality of its insights in order to:

⁴¹ Although Freud does clearly acknowledge the importance of the social realm, for example, noting the dialectic between self and society in *Civilization and its Discontents*; "Just as a planet revolves around a central body as well as rotating on its own axis, so the human individual takes part in the course of development of mankind, at the same time as he pursues his own path in life". After this formulation, we could also suggest that each subject's sexuality contributes to the social identities, discourses and meanings of sexuality, which inflect the sexualities of individual subjects in turn.

apprehend the definitive influence of society, culture, and history on the subject's erotic desires as rendered *as* sexuality; and to deconstruct the broader social edifice of sexuality, attending to its historical contingency and its gendered and racialised dimensions. Attending to this second critical frame, psychoanalysis might come to recognise its own complicity in the construction of 'sexuality', such that it has all-too-often been a shorthand for the sexual identity and erotic desires of one specific subject: the straight, White, upper class male.

Foucault's now-canonical work in *The Theory of Sexuality Vol. 1* is useful for formulating how sexuality and subjectivity are produced by language and discourses. In contrast to the repression theories of Marxo-Freudians such as Wilhelm Reich (1989), Foucault emphasised that sexualities were socially constructed, disciplined, and regulated (a movement that clearly compliments my own formulation, which is indebted to the *Foucauldian turn*). Thus for Foucault, the human sciences (and to a lesser degree psychoanalysis⁴²) were a normative, disciplinary force, which have produced knowledge about 'human nature', sex, and sexuality, through which these phenomena are in turn experienced. For Foucault, the human sciences did not simply record what they saw; rather they discursively positioned and constructed particular objects of enquiry (the masturbating child, the hysterical woman, the perverse adult; all in implicit contradistinction to a normative (racialised [White], gendered [male]) subject of sexuality). In this formulation sexual subjects become, "targets and anchorage points for the vectors of knowledge" (1976: 105). Once constructed as such, these sexual subjects could be identified, recognised, disciplined, and (self-) regulated. Sexual subjectivities became social identities, with all the consequences of such totalizing subject positions. To quote one of Foucault's

⁴² In fact, although Foucault has often been positioned as anti-psychoanalytic – a reflection of the conflation of psychology and psychoanalysis at the time he was publishing, and the relative dominance (certainly compared to today) of psychoanalytic approaches to mental ill health in France (where it arguably remains more influential than in the UK) – he was perhaps less anti-psychoanalytic than *anti-psychological*. For one, Dean and Lane (2000) note that in the English translations of his work, "psychiatry" is mistranslated as "psychoanalysis", so that critiques of the former were read as pertaining to the latter. Dean also notes elsewhere that Foucault draws a clear distinction between psychology and psychoanalysis, which on my reading suggests that he had some sympathy with Freud: ""(i)t is not psychology that is involved in psychoanalysis; but precisely an experience of unreason that is has been psychology's meaning, in the modern world, to mask", (quoted in Dean, 2000: 3). Here then, it is clearly psychology, not psychoanalysis, that emerges as the normative force *par excellence*.

most famous passages; “The sodomite *had been* a temporary *aberration*; the *homosexual* was now a species” (1978/1998: 43). Referring back to my earlier model, this movement also marks a further reification of sexuality, as it goes from being the thing that re-renders desires in terms of the social (the sodomites desire to anally penetrate/be anally penetrated, which may attach itself to particular racialised, gendered, classed objects of desire) into an identity category, instantiating the second, more singular formulation of sexuality as an all-consuming category of identity and narrative-of-self.

As Foucault notes, over the longer term and despite the institution of specific anti-Sodomy laws, the ontological move towards sexuality as a privileged basis for identity also marked an historical shift in the societal regulation of sex from one of legal/state repression to one of self-regulation. Once the categories “straight” and “gay” were instantiated, sexual subjects could be largely left to organise their desires and sexualities around them. This is not so much a question of forcing sexualities to fit a particular narrative, so much as that categories of sexuality provide a heuristic around which sexual subjects interpret their erotic lives, privileging some aspects, while discarding (even disavowing) others, in order to adhere to the logics of socially-sanctioned, culturally-intelligible *sexuality*. Another way in which social categorisations of sexuality regulate ‘desire *as* sexuality’ (as an assemblage) is by instantiating sexual fields (Green, 2008b), which in turn take up common objects of desire, norms, and values, and go on to inflect and produce (racialised) desires and sexuality. As anyone with even a cursory interest will know, the “gay scene” is awash with subcultures, but to take just one example; there is surely nothing innate to the fact of male same-sex desire that would also imply an attraction to leather, yet the leather scene has remained an important strand in gay male subculture, sculpting the desires and sexualities of successive initiates (see also the aforementioned bears, jocks, clones, daddies, twinkies – all, to greater and lesser degrees, implicitly racialised as White).

At the level of sexuality as social category it is also notable that there is – consciously - no space for ‘race’; and where ‘race’ inflects sexuality as an

assemblage, it is often deemed impolite to discuss or acknowledge it. Rather, sexuality as a White western episteme rejects 'race' outright, accommodating only sexual difference, and to a lesser degree gender. Since sexuality (as a social identity) has a monopoly on recognising the (in)validity of desires and sexuality (as an assemblage), its inability to grapple with 'race' has effects. I would suggest that racialised sexualities become erotically charged and psychically freighted by society's refusal to recognise them (a point also made by McBride, 2005); that is they become over-invested or over-burdened as object cathexes and/or they are over-determined by meanings that the desiring subject will struggle (consciously) to decipher. We might suggest that in this context, 'race' stands to become a likely target for psychic displacement from an originary *incorporated* object or the kind of disavowed loss/disintegration anxiety associated with fetish; doubling up in the process as a placeholder for all the things sexuality cannot, consciously acknowledge.

The refusal of 'race' by sexuality (as social identity) should also (at the very least) make us suspicious of who or what it is serving, and its broader aetiology and origins; a suspicion that has proved fruitful to anti-colonial and anti-racist scholars. Siobhan Sommerville (2000) argues that the regulatory regimes of 'race' and sexuality were historically intersected, with the new disciplines of sex such as sexology and psychoanalysis leaning on the "assumptions and the heightened surveillance of bodies in a racially segregated culture", which had, "demanded a specific kind of logic, which... gave coherence to the new concepts of homo- and heterosexuality" (2000: 4). In this vein, Laura Anne Stoler's work addresses a conspicuous lacuna in Foucault's oeuvre, arguing persuasively that none of the objects of knowledge produced by psychoanalysis (and sexology) – the masturbating child, the hysterical woman, the adult pervert – existed, "without a racially erotic counterpoint, without reference to the libidinal energies of the savage, the primitive, the colonized – reference points of difference, critique, and desire" (1995: 6-7). Utilising Foucault's concept of the 'archaeology of silence', Stoler demonstrates how the colonised subject was an unspoken Other, a point of reference against which a normative model of European sexuality could construct itself. As Greg Thomas notes then (2007),

sexuality is a living, breathing, legacy of European imperialism, which is not only *not* constructed with non-White people in mind, but is explicitly *anti-Black*; with Black subjects representing the implicit primitive, perverse and pathological benchmark against which a supposedly healthy European sexuality was formulated.

Foucault's formulation of the power of discourses takes us beyond psychoanalysis' radical attempt to disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions about sexuality (e.g. the purported absence of sexuality in children), to dislodge the epistemological assumptions on which sexuality as we know it is based; that is, the idea that there will be some core or universal 'truth' about human sexuality that is simply waiting to be uncovered. While the Foucauldian tradition has subsequently tended to produce accounts of sexuality that frame it more strictly in terms of language and discourse, I believe my own racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' framework is better able to acknowledge the importance of the socio-cultural to the content and form of sexuality, while holding onto the lived experience of sexuality as something psychic, embodied and *unique* in the realm of subjectivity. My framework aims to capture human forms of life at what Sylvia Wynter calls, "hybridly biological (bios) and narrative-discursive (logos) levels of existence" (1994: 48), resulting in a specifically human perceptual framework which girds all our interactions with, and apprehensions of, the external world.

Unsurprisingly, Freud's formulation of female sexuality, positioned – like Eve to Adam - as a variation on the original, male sexuality, deaf to the societal context of patriarchy, and predicated on taken-for-granted notions of femininity, has attracted significant critique from feminists. De Beauvoir (1960/2015: 38-52) critiqued Freud's taking-for-granted of precisely that which he must account for – amongst others then: men's relative position of power over women; the social value placed on virility; and his unquestioningly linking the feminine with passivity and the masculine with activity. De Beauvoir further singles out for opprobrium Freud's description of the libido as "invariably and necessarily of a masculine nature, whether it occurs in men or women", a statement he apologises for in a later footnote to his text, before missing the point again;

“when for instance libido is described in the text above as being “masculine” the word was being used in this sense (of activity), for an instinct is always active” (1949/2011: 97).

This joining of active to masculine and passive to feminine remains untroubled in Freud, but the naturalness of these layered binaries is effectively critiqued by later feminist work, not least by Butler’s emphasis on the *performativity* of gender (1990). Butler reformulates gender away from biology and centres the influence of social scripts as these becomes psychically and phenomenologically mediated, with the subject feeling ‘hailed’ to perform gender as a means of negotiating the social realm. Gender performances are more and less culturally intelligible and therefore more and less poised to elicit recognition (an acknowledgement from the other of one’s subjectivity for which sexuality is arguably a privileged site). In Butler’s formulation, gender scripts become psychically inscribed and made live in the flesh, through the repetition of particular actions that constitute performances of gender. Crucially, gender scripts and performances are not a matter of free or rational choice – that is, as though the subject were wandering through an identity supermarket, picking positions off the shelves at will. Rather they are produced as a result of an often-messy interpellation, in which subjects can refuse to be hailed or come reluctantly (to name but two potential responses). In so far as desire can elicit recognition of gendered performances, we are then prompted to reflect on the degree to which such performances need, as it were, *two to tango*; an observation that limns the relationality of the imbricated processes of desire, sexuality, and identity. The gender (just as the ‘racial’) performance of the desired other does something to the gender (or ‘racial’) performance of the subject themselves; it might variously buttress or undermine it. As the parenthetical preceding sentence indicates, one important critique that has been made of Butler’s contribution is its failure to deploy an intersectional model of gender, in so doing missing the opportunity to think through the ways in which racial performances (and racialised gender performances – a tautology of gender) might work in the same way (a line of enquiry that Gail Lewis’ work [e.g. Lewis, 2007] does take-up). Importantly, I think understanding that gender and

‘race’ – like ‘desire *as* sexuality’ – are both psychically inscribed and *in the body* takes us some way to understanding the appeal of ‘race’ and racialised gender *for* ‘desire *as* sexuality’ (and ‘desire *as* sexuality’ for ‘race’ and gender).

Sexuality as a racialised (White/anti-Black) formation

Given this appeal of ‘race’ for ‘desire *as* sexuality’, its omission from theoretical formulations of sexuality is highly conspicuous (suggesting the taboos and anxieties that have circulated around desires that cross *the Color Line*), especially given the frequency of ‘interracial’ sex as a fact (and attraction) of life in the colonies and across the Americas when the dominant formulations of sexuality in sexology and psychoanalysis were being formulated. When ‘race’ does appear in Freud’s work on sexuality, it is in the figure of “savage” or “primitive” peoples who serve as convenient points of comparison for *Man* (Wynter, 2003), with frequent references to “Civilisation” (singular), a factor which for Freud encouraged sexuality on its normal course. In this vein, Freud proffers the figure of the uncivilised woman whose sexuality is akin to that of a child: “children behave in the same kind of way as an average uncultivated woman⁴³ in whom the same polymorphously perverse disposition persists” (1949/2011: 69)⁴⁴. It is children, uncultivated women, and the non-White who *remain* polymorphously perverse, which is by such a formulation once again reinforced as the natural state of human sexuality. As such, sexuality emerges as the mark of the one, true, White European Civilisation; a colonising episteme that continues to exert its effects in the present (Gopinath, 2005; Puar, 2007).

The consideration of the place of ‘race’ in ‘desire *as* sexuality’ foregrounds important questions about their subjects and objects. The position of the desiring subject who assumes a socially sanctioned, culturally-intelligible

⁴³ It is not clear here whether “uncultivated woman” refers to prostitutes (mentioned later in the text) or the women of so-called “primitive” societies, both of whom are positioned by Freud as uncivilized and thus immune to the ‘civilizing’ influence of culture on sexuality. Both these figures might also be ‘racialised’, particularly in terms of the concept of degeneracy.

⁴⁴ Sander Gilman has also argued that Freud’s perpetuation of White racism reflected his own anxieties and relationship to Whiteness as a Jewish person, and thus part of an increasingly visible and marginalized racialised minority (Gilman, 1995).

sexuality is not equally available to all subjects at all times. Again Wynter's work is instructive here (1994; 2003), as she delineates the historical construction via the human sciences of anthropology, sociology and psychology, of a distinct category, "Man", as the only permissible 'subject' under the present epistemological *order of things*, while the rest – which Wynter calls the "human species" – become its *objects*. The desiring subject of Western discourse then, constructed through its accumulated knowledges, is a straight, bourgeois, White *Man*, a subject formation that sits atop a racialised, gendered and classed hierarchy that colonialism has carried all over the world. And it was *this* subject that was colonial modernity's bequest to Freud, who then theorised *Man's* interiority; a genealogy that needs bearing in mind whenever we engage psychoanalysis (Khanna, 2003). Wynter also calls our attention to the fundamental intersection of 'race' and class, drawing on Du Bois to argue that, "the Color Line, functions to systematically pre-determine the sharply unequal re-distribution of the collectively produced global resources" (1994: 52). This echoes Cedric Robinson's formulation of 'race' as always-also a question of "racial capitalism" (1983); knowledge systems of racial hierarchy having being present from the dawn of modern capitalism in Europe, where they were deployed to distinguish civilised from uncivilised European populations, and to justify and facilitate the unequal distribution of resources amongst them (another of colonialism's enduring legacies). The compulsion of 'race' as a system of social categorisation and stratification is deeply influenced by regimes of (industrial/colonial/social democratic/neo-liberal/surveillance) capitalism and their distributions of wealth and resources, which inflect the contents of racialised desires and render sexual subjectivities, and sexuality itself, as profoundly *racialised and classed* formations (D'Emilio, 1983; Berbubé, 2001; Ferguson, 2003).

In his *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (1970/1988), Joel Kovel analyses the dialectic by which the psyche is inscribed by 'race' and 'race', in turn, is structured by psychic processes; a dialectic which suggests that society does not merely determine the subject, but is reciprocally determined by the vicissitudes of unconscious desire. As such, for Kovel, "personality and culture are parallel

organisms" (1988: 250). Revising and racialising Freud's formulation, Kovel suggests that the "whole history of the individual is condensed in the Oedipus complex" (1988: 288), of which the unsatisfactory resolution – especially the repression of unacceptable desires (for which we can read *all* desires that cross *the Color Line*) – leads to the development of dominant and repressive modes of relationality. From the individual up, dominance becomes culturally inscribed in and institutionalised in a "symbolic matrix" of racist relations and representations. For Kovel, the historical encounter between different races thus became an opportunity for Whites to project their unresolved Oedipal frustrations onto the Black *Other*. Kovel notes that "White racism induces the very existence of racial objects", and, I might add, many of these are also racialised *sexual* objects (never subjects). Kovel highlights in particular the White fear of Black men, which constructs them as a threat to White women, and contrary to Fanon's take (1967/1986), suggests this fear originates not with White women, but White men. Kovel argues that White men's access to power and the means of production has amplified their neuroses into an entire patriarchal culture, in which the projection onto Black men of an inimitable sexual potency has constructed an ever-present existential threat to White women. As Ivan Ward notes in his introduction to Kovel's book, these racist fantasies come out of and are nourished by, "an 'irrational element' that resists sociological analysis" (1988: xv), the unconscious. This focus on the unconscious element in racism (and the unconscious processes of identification, splitting, projection and phantasising) and dialectic between the individual subject and social structures again suggests something important about the relationship between 'desire as sexuality' and 'race'. I have noted at several points throughout this chapter the mirroring of structures of desire/sexuality – the ambivalence of identification, the paranoid-schizoid splitting by which desire/sexuality keeps apart the desirable and the 'disgusting', the difference and similitude that define the subject's experience of the world – with structures of 'race' and racism. Here, I am prompted to suggest after Kovel's work, that this mirroring is not merely coincidental but indicative of the degree to which desire/sexuality has been foundational to the construction of 'race' and racist thinking from their very beginnings as a defining episteme and social structure of European modernity.

And while ‘race’ and racism’s endurance and stickiness is unequivocally a highly complex, multivalent phenomenon, I want to suggest that its grounding in the structures of desire as they become rendered *as* sexuality, and the latter’s inherent insatiable quality (it’s ability to rebound), goes some way to explaining this intractability. It is on this basis that I advance the idea that ‘race’ needs desire and desire needs ‘race’, an argument I think Darieck Scott makes when he describes, “the mutually constituting relations between the definition and content of race and the definition and content of sexuality” (2010: 251). I also explore this insight on a smaller scale, and in more applied fashion, through the empirical work that follows this chapter.

Hortense Spillers (2003) posits American chattel slavery – a society defined, amongst others *grotesqueries*, by the regularity and spectacularity of anti-Black sexual violence - as a kind of *originary scene* for contemporary formations of sexuality. Taking this as a starting point for thinking seriously about the conditions under which a desiring subject might be *allowed* - or have the potential - to acquire and successfully inhabit *a sexuality*, Spillers suggests that; “Whether or not ‘pleasure’ is possible at all under conditions of non-freedom for both or either of the parties has not been settled. Indeed we could go so far as to entertain the very real possibility that sexuality, as a term of implied relatedness is dubiously appropriate... to any of the familial arrangements under a system of enslavement... the customary aspects of sexuality, including ‘reproduction’... ‘pleasure’ and ‘desire’ are all thrown in crisis” (2003: 221). While my own position is that sexuality is always a matter of *unfreedom*, crucially this does not mean that all desiring subjects are all *equally unfree*; rather, the desiring subject’s potential to inhabit sexuality successfully, and the degree to which it constitutes *a prison*, is always-already mediated by ‘race’, gender, class and other rubrics of social difference⁴⁵. Spillers’ work also prompts us to consider the material and symbolic legacies of chattel slavery, not least in the realm of sexuality, which was not created for Black subjects to inhabit and continues to contribute in no small part to their *abjection*, while the desires and sexualities of

⁴⁵ Furthermore, scholars in the emergent so-called Afro-pessimism tradition - such as Wilderson (2010) and Sexton (2011) - have suggested that the Black subject’s *unfreedom* is more specifically a kind of *social death* tied to enslavement and its afterlife.

Black subjects continue to be constructed as degenerate, transgressive, and *queer* (hooks, 1992; Hill-Collins, 2006; Scott, 2010; Snorton, 2014). Thus, advancing an argument that complicates the notion of free choice undergirding the “just a preference” discourse, Darieck Scott argues that, “‘choice’... presupposes a certain (implicitly male) bourgeois subject endowed with certain social and political rights” (2010: 7), and that, “to speak... of black sexuality is to do so unaccompanied by the pleasurable illusion of choice or self-mastery” (2010: 156). Scott’s argument here recalls Fanon’s formulation of the black subject as doubly alienated by entry into a White racist Symbolic order, and limns the stakes of what it means if the subject’s desires must indeed be rendered *as* sexuality.

Circling back to the material histories of Black oppression which are Spiller’s point of departure, Holland (2012) and Weheliye (2014) also suggest that sexual normativity is experienced differently by Black subjects on account of the material histories of racist oppression to which they have been subjected. Weheliye formulates this in terms of the fact that, “The histories of racial slavery, colonialism, Jim Crow, the prison, and the like, which all represent different racialising assemblages in Man’s extensive armory, have constitutively incapacitated black subjects’ ability to conform to hegemonic gender and sexuality norms, and often excessively so” (2014: 42) (and note the recurrence of Wynter’s *Man* here; the (straight) White male subject of European imperial modernity). Weheliye’s argument suggests that under these conditions, sexual and gender normativity is always-already mediated by ‘race’, in ways that exclude and facilitate the *abjection* of Black subjects. These normativities have in turn been used as grounds to legitimate the continued marginalization and pathologisation of Black formations of gender and sexuality. As such, a formulation of the Oedipus complex – or any equivalent narrative of sexual development - that privileges both normative White heterosexuality and White gender formations - *pace* sexuality *as we know it* - must be problematized as yet another “racialising assemblage in Man’s extensive armory” (Weheliye, 2014: 42).

A related point picked up by Holland is that under this regime of racialised sexual normativity, Black subjects are precluded from claiming sexuality for themselves. Holland argues that sexuality exists for White sexual subjects, such that, “Blackness, at least as it is understood in visual culture, not only produces “erotic value” for whiteness, but it holds the very impossibility of its own pleasure through becoming the sexualized surrogate of another. In a sense, *blackness can never possess its own erotic life.*” (2012: 46). This argument then begins to address a question raised earlier, namely, why do we need ‘race’? What does it do for us? And who is it for? Here, Blackness is formulated as providing “erotic value” for Whiteness, holding out the prospect of meaning and pleasure for White subjects, while the White supremacist racial order precludes Black subjects from assuming the same position of agency. One example of this “erotic value” is provided by Robert J. C. Young, who notes that the English have traditionally been, “sick with desire for the Other”. He goes on: “Racial theory, which ostensibly seeks to keep races forever apart, transmutes into expressions of the clandestine, furtive forms of what can be called colonial desire: a covert but insistent obsession with transgressive, interracial sex, hybridity and miscegenation” (1995: 2). Echoing Kovel, we are forced to confront again how *Man’s* construction of racial difference provides an epidermal canvas onto which White desire has historically projected aspects of itself it would rather not confront, a dynamic we might psychoanalytically formulate as a *projective identification* that sustains the *investment in* and creates *desire for* the racial Other. Holland also prompts us to consider the desiring subject, formulated according to a logic of erotic *agency*, as always-already racialised. Weheliye picks up this point, arguing that, “human sexuality is systematically designated for white bodies and sexual savagery for non-white ones, Black bodies most of all”, and concluding that sexuality is locked into an “erotics of Aryanism” (2014: 23). It might very well be that sexuality *as we know it* is sustaining both this “erotics of Aryanism” - by which Blackness is always-already defined by histories of colonialism and White racism - and the wider material oppression of Black subjects. Both Holland’s and Weheliye’s arguments are reminiscent of Irigaray’s point about women who, “cannot be investors in the marketplace of desire but are instead commodities that circulate in it” (quoted in De Lauretis, 1994: 217).

While all erotic desires, and vastly more so sexuality, are to some degree a matter of subjection (and *subjectification*), important points are raised here about the structural – racialised, gendered and material - terms on which subjects enter the sexual marketplace.

Where Holland and Weheliye problematize the very notion of sexuality for Black subjects, Darieck Scott (1992) and Rinaldo Walcott (2003) also seek to reclaim a place for (gay male) Black sexual subjectivity within the normative racialised sexual order. Scott sets himself the bold and complex task of seeking to wrestle an empowered (sexual) subjectivity from the jaws of Black abjection, formulating the latter as, “a way of describing an experience, an inherited (psychically introjected) historical legacy, and a social condition defined and underlined by defeat” (2010: 17). Thinking through the figure of the “Black Power Bottom” being penetrated by a White top, Scott suggests that the erotic desire of this sexual subject cannot simply be read as straightforward masochism and/or internalised racism and self-hate. Rather, he suggests that for the Black Power bottom, as for Black subjects more generally, “suffering seems, at some level or some far-flung contact point, to merge into something like ability, like power (and certainly, like pleasure) without losing or denying what it is to suffer” (2010: 15). As such, Scott suggests that a reclamation and re-rendering of abjection in and through sexuality holds out the possibility of “defeating the internalised self-defeat demanded by the legacies of history” (2010: 207).

Further restoring the notion of agency to Black subjects, (in a much earlier work) Scott argues that despite the socio-historical life of ‘race’, its resonances and meaning for individual Black subjects are not exhausted by dominant discourses. In what strikes me as a quintessentially psychoanalytic rendering of racial symbolism, Scott exemplifies this through the figure of the “snow queen” – a Black man who dates White men – arguing that, “Even if “the sign of difference remains the same... what is projected onto that sign may not be stable”... “The qualities snow queen A might invest in white men, and his success in holding on to those investments, will be partially influenced by the specific persons with

whom he has sex, and his investments might be rather different, strong or less strong, from snow queen B's" (1992: 311). That is, contra what I would argue is a particularly persistent and emphatic impulse to fix racial meanings for everyone, at all times, and in spite of the importance of dominant ways of seeing 'race', we cannot presume to know what Whiteness or Blackness means to any one sexual subject; an argument that has echoes in attempts to frame all desire for the Other *exclusively* in neo-colonial terms (a position that may be a necessary nuisance if we agree with Scott's point, advanced in chapter 1, that the "analytic of suspicion and disapproval" to which interracial desires are subjected is itself *necessary* to rescue "desire from the mysterious realm of romance" [1992: 299]).

Developing a position advanced by Mercer and Julien (1988) – explored in chapter 1 – Rinaldo Walcott's work engages the position of the Black, queer, desiring subject to explore how even where 'interracial' intimacy is framed according to colonial scripts, these might still be rehabilitated as a source of pleasure for individual (Black) subjects. Describing the potential pleasure of acting out White-authored sexual scripts, Walcott argues that, "To enjoy being constituted as the Negro (either brute or passive) is to open up the disturbing pleasures of a post-liberation society haunted by the constitutive degradations of the erotic economy of slavery" (2003: 141). Here, Walcott seems to hold out the prospect, against all odds, of the Black sexual subject recuperating pleasure from a normative sexual order that is designed to deny them any such thing. We might think of this being the task of all queer subjects – and many feminists would argue it is the lot of all straight women – but it is clear that it becomes doubly so for the Black queer subject. Walcott's position here is also reminiscent of a Muñozian *disidentification*, as the Black queer subject who has been written into this dominant script in the capacity of *supporting actor* – that is to say, there at the pleasure and behest of the White protagonist – turns tables and wrestles his own pleasure against the odds. That these pleasures to which Walcott refers are indeed also "disturbing" is a fact almost invariably glossed over in the rush to forget our racial pasts and embrace the promise of a *postracial* utopian future. This is a glossing anchored in our willful forgetting of colonialism and chattel slavery as the traumatic histories that wrote the contemporary world in which

we now live. This renders these histories fundamental to a culturally anchored formulation of 'desire as sexuality' for both White and Black subjects alike, although in profoundly different ways.

In embarking on this attempt to racialise queer desire through psychoanalysis, I have sought to both limn the importance of 'race' to any account of sexuality, and to make the case for psychoanalysis as a preeminent vocabulary through which to render desire's complexity, messiness, and viscosity. In the nascent tradition of psychosocial studies, I also hope to have made a case for the value in bringing psychoanalysis into conversation with other bodies of theory, without which it risks becoming ahistorical, dogmatic, and blind to its own ideological biases. While in one sense de Beauvoir was not wrong when she condemned Freud's *Theories of Sexuality* as demonstrating an "embarrassing flexibility on a basis of rigid concepts" (de Beauvoir 1960, 38), I would argue that this flexibility is amongst the key advantages of a properly psychosocial psychoanalysis, which acknowledges its own limitations and promotes an iterative, hybridised approach, wedded to a tradition of rigorous criticality. This criticality and the registers to which psychoanalysis attends – affective, biographical, and in its more sophisticated permutations, cultural – is increasingly essential to counter rationalist conceptions of human subjectivity and behaviour that dominate both within and outside of the critical academes of the social sciences. Further, remaining attentive to the constructed nature of psychoanalytic discourse does not preclude us from engaging with it as a means of deconstructing contemporary subjectivities and sexualities. As Mercer notes, "Psychoanalysis continues to provide insight into cultural practices... because it is the founding myth of our emotional modernity" (1987: 446). It was also in and through psychoanalysis – in conversation with other bodies of critical theory that limn and stretch psychoanalysis' own inherent queerness *and* effectively hold onto 'race' – that I was able to orient and anchor myself theoretically, generating a richer formulation of the racialisation of desire- as sexuality; one that remains for me, personally and intellectually, the most *passionate* of fictions.

Chapter 3 ~ Methodologies: the racialisation of ‘desire as sexuality’ in the field

In the preceding chapter I pursued an expansive piece of work formulating the racialisation of sexuality (or ‘desire as sexuality’) through critical theory. I now present a more neatly defined articulation of the racialisation of ‘desire as sexuality’, which I call the “RoDaS framework”. In marshalling the ideas in the preceding chapter into the ‘neatness’ of a framework, my intention is to more clearly define which ideas carry over from chapter 2 into my fieldwork, while providing the opportunity for readers less interested in theory to understand my fieldwork without the need to engage that more expansive ‘theoretical intervention’. This framework provides the theoretical foundation – including considered reflections on ontology and epistemology – that girds the two theoretically-driven empirical methodologies I pursue in chapters 4 and 5 (the methodologies for each of which I elaborate below). Both my empirical analyses - of Grindr profiles and of the research interviews – adopt a ‘theory-first’ approach, the starting point for which is the RoDaS framework. I hope this framework may provide a starting point for other researchers who wish to conduct work in the area of racialised sexualities, as I believe it constitutes a highly generative psychosocial approach to the topic. Nonetheless the RoDaS framework is clearly not in-itself a *methodology*, and nor is it ready to be taken and simply ‘applied’ in the field without one. As such, this chapter is comprised of three parts:

- (1) a synopsis of the ‘RoDaS’ theoretical framework
- (2) a reflexive delineation of the methodology I used in my theoretically-driven thematic analysis, which starts with RoDaS (emphasising historicity, social regulation, and psychic mediation), and for which ‘applied’ methodological guidance is drawn chiefly from Braun & Clarke (2006), working within the Qualitative Psychology paradigm
- (3) a reflexive delineation of the biographical interview and analytic reading methodology I apply in chapter 5. There I apply RoDaS in the field by privileging participants’ wider biographies and life narratives, and

iterating a psychosocial reading practice which accents the subjective mediation of the always-already central 'social' and historical.

My racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' ('RoDaS') framework

Drawing on a distinction explored in-depth in the preceding chapter, the racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' framework formulates desire and sexuality as discrete but overlapping objects, reflecting the diphasic model of sexuality advanced by psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche (1970/1985). Laplanche argued that the subject's sexuality was a show in two parts. Following the core insight of psychoanalysis that sexuality begins in infancy, Laplanche suggests that early experiences that will subsequently become rendered as sexual are first registered by the infant in the realm of *desire* but cannot be apprehended in terms of their *sexual* dimensions until the onset of puberty. This holds onto the psychoanalytic insight that primary carers equate to primary sexual and love objects (without necessitating their being apprehended as such, especially by a young child). An example of this might be that the sensations associated with breast feeding are registered as both *sensual* and *pleasurable* (and related in the infant's inner object world to the primary carer to whom the nurturing breasts are attached), but not as *sexual*; not that is, until these sensations and associated objects become re-rendered *as sexuality* during puberty, a process that largely takes place in the subject's unconscious. The initial experience associated with the nurturing breast – sensual and pleasurable - can be thus located on the terrain of *desire*. The rendering of breast sucking as a sexual act, and one for which the subject feels compelled to seek out a replacement object (not necessarily a breast of course!), I locate on the terrain of *sexuality*.

With this in mind I formulate the racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' as the moment when a more fluid, unbounded world of sensual pleasures and objects becomes rendered more explicitly in terms of the sexual. Desire has already laid down the *structures* that sexuality will take, which reflect fundamental and inevitable aspects and experiences of the human condition: the *difference and similitude* generated by the infant's coming to terms with their separation from

the other and their existence as a materially-bounded subject (notably linked by psychoanalysts such as Benjamin [1983] to the *dominance/submission* dynamic); the co-presence of love and hate manifest in *ambivalence*, which can also be seen as a product of the challenges of living and relating as nominally individuated selves. At the point of sexuality, and in concert with the contents of the dynamic, mediated, and multivalent identifications on which desire - and in turn sexuality - rest, these structures of desire find social repositories that are mirrors of themselves: most obviously 'race', gender, class, but ultimately any social category that pivots on sameness and difference and the constitutive ambivalences to which intersubjective relations always-already give rise. Especially dangerous in combination with the violence of social categories of difference and 'othering' is desire's *insatiable* quality – tied to the libido – which creates a psychosocial perfect storm, always leaving the subject wanting more (of 'race', gender, class, and so on).

In the course of this rendering of 'desire *as* sexuality', the social categories on which the subject lands – formations of 'race' and gender – become sexualised and made erotically meaningful. This process is reinforced by the historical residues of sexuality through the ages, which have imbued and saturated social categories and meanings with erotic significance to the point of *overdetermination*. Thus, each category of social difference contains an abundance of erotic representations and meanings on which the sexual subject can dine out for a lifetime. I suggest that this aspect of rendering desire *as* sexuality can be configured as an eroticised interpellation into the social (imagine Althusser's policeman in an especially sexy guise [Althusser, 1971/2001; Butler, 1990])⁴⁶. Nonetheless, because the subject is psychodynamic, this framework does not reduce them to pawns of history or social discourses but emphasises that these representations are both taken in and mediated. This mediation occurs by way of the dynamism of identification, object relating, phantasy, and psychic defences such as splitting and projection, and the accumulated particularity of their biography. Thus, for the subject's

⁴⁶ In my conclusion, and following Scott (2010), I will extend this point to suggest that the process of *subjection* to the social becomes eroticized in and of itself.

personal experience of the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality', key influences are the meanings that attach to 'race' or particular racial formations *for individual subjects*. This is a psychosocial process in so far as it formulated as a function (at the very least) of *both* the subject's biography rendered through a dynamic psyche, *and* the racialised discourses, constructions, and formations that the subject both internalises and reworks through these psychic processes. Further, because desire – anchored to object relations – is predicated on identifications, which in turn are mediated in and through the vicissitudes of phantasy, means that what becomes consciously manifest in sexuality is only ever a partial picture. Working through phantasy, identifications offer the subject the opportunity to be both the subject and their object of desire – man and woman, top and bottom, White and Black – providing an unconscious second register to the relationality of 'desire *as* sexuality'. This relationality is mirrored at the social level by the structure of categories like 'race' and gender, which require another to define and secure the self. In wanting to open up a space for the subject to become simultaneously (erotically) saturated with the social and yet never merely a pawn of it, Munozian disidentification is again helpful, providing a theoretical space in which the subject can be "within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously" (1999: 5); in two places at once, and with the potential to make small but meaningful gestures of refusal. This is especially important in the context of the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' in gay male, MSM and queer contexts, which are always-already non-normative (even at their most *homonormative*).

The final aspect of the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' is that while all these psychosocial processes are in motion, society imposes upon the subject an especially emphatic command. The subject must define their sexuality and live it as an identity. Every choice of sexual object and every sexual act becomes rendered in terms of ontology and identity. Ambiguity is punished and certitude rewarded. Social boundaries are erected, internalised, and psychosocially regulated. Sexuality as a narrative-of-self emerges here, wherein sexuality is constructed as a privileged terrain of subjectivity and a key to self-understanding (a formulation of sexuality that is especially indebted to European modernity

[Thomas, 2007]). This narrative-of-self favours fixity and specificity and to be a gay man is not enough; one must be top, bottom, or versatile, have a 'tribe', and a type (all of these, racialised formations).

Putting myself into this framework to provide an applied example, I think of 'desire' as the realm of my dreams, where it is racialised and gendered yes, but not *as* sexuality. In my dreams I am far more pansexual than IRL; there I find myself in erotic encounters with all kinds of people who do not meet the more and less conscious criteria of my sexuality. Given the psychoanalytic formulation of dreams as symbolic, I am not suggesting that these erotic encounters should be read exclusively in terms of their manifest (as opposed to their latent) content; nonetheless I believe that the erotic possibilities remain abundant in desire in a way I experience as lacking in the sometimes depressingly-narrow and anxiously-guarded frames of my sexuality.

Reflecting the debt that the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' owes to trans-disciplinary work on 'race', I now undertake an expansion of the framework highlighting three key features:

- 1) Racialised sexualities are vectors for the ongoing saga of racist colonialism, a fact which limns the historicity of racialised 'desire as sexuality' and its genesis as a "racial formation" (Omi & Winant, 1986/2014)
- 2) The dynamic mediation of history through an embodied psyche, privileging 'queer of colour' and 'quare' revisions of the psychoanalytic concept of (dis)identification as
- 3) The need to take heed of critical race theory and shift the 'intentionality' paradigm that circulates around wider discussion of racialised sexualities, to one that acknowledges the sexual subject as a quasi-agentic actor capable of existential acts *with effects*.

The racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' as a racial formation theory

It is through racial formation theory that I locate the racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' as an historically-anchored theory, which locates the past - in a mutational rather than a linear form - in the present; a temporal dynamic that I attempt to unpick tentatively in my reading of Grindr in Chapter 4. We can trace the origins of our contemporary racialised world to the project of European colonialism, in which 'race', in its enduring conceptualisation as a biological fact, was invented (Omi & Winant, 1986/2014). In this epoch, theologically-informed debates about "monogenesis" and "polygenesis" speculated about whether the brown bodies encountered in colonial plunders were the result of God having created one, or many, distinct human species. Thinking 'racially' collapsed the diversity of what we might today think of as 'ethnicity' under the rubric of a massively simplified hierarchical 'racial' order, so that, for example, every native inhabitant of sub-Saharan Africa suddenly became "Black", just as, in time, ethnically diverse Europeans who had once been *othered* would vie for the mantle of Whiteness. As White people were doing the conquering, so darker skins became the canvases onto which were culturally inscribed meanings conducive to the perpetuation of colonial capitalism and relations of domination. With this historical context in mind, Omi & Winant argue that, "social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories" (1986/2014: 12), a process the authors call "racial formation". These "racial formations" have always been steeped in ideas about sexuality, and erotic desire has always been foundational to their appeal. As Greg Thomas notes (2007: 7), alluding to the archetypal figure of the European Enlightenment; "The Man of Reason claims to master the world of sensuality in which primitives are said to dwell" (a formulation that also draws heavily on the work of Sylvia Wynter, which I explore below). Notably, Black bodies continue to be marked in terms of hyper-sexuality, sensuality, and corporeality, while Whiteness, and especially White masculinity, is still framed in terms of the rarefication, self-discipline, and rationality that are the cultivated markers of 'Civilisation' (sing.) proper. Thus, the Man of Reason endures as an axis on which all contemporary, racialised sexualities turn. Accordingly, this observation informs both my theoretical

formulation of 'desire *as* sexuality' in chapter 3, and my reading of Grindr profiles in Chapter 4.

In the process of projecting meanings onto the racialised Other, White people were also provided with a newly racialised sense of themselves. As Winthrop Jordan writes of the English colonialists, "From the initially common term Christian... there was a marked shift towards English and free. After about 1680, taking the colonies as a whole, a new term of self-identification appeared – white" (1968/1977, as quoted in Omi & Winant, 1986/2014: 14). Colonialism thus also marked the emergence of a White sense-of-self. As historian David Roediger has argued, as an unstable historical construct, the boundaries of this Whiteness have been continually contested and reformulated to accommodate the interests of the capitalist ruling class (1991/1999). Thus the Irish, who would once have belonged to the sensuous and uncivilised realm of the colonised, could, in the interests of American capitalism, become interpellated and incorporated into the category of Whiteness; establishing in the process a highly profitable (for the White American ruling class) racial cleavage between the Irish and African American working classes. As Omi & Winant argue then, "The effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and "decentred" complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (1986/2014: 15). If 'race' is indeed unstable and decentred, this might contribute amongst other things to our understanding of both the ambivalence and anxiety that circulate around 'racial' categorisation, and the appeal of 'desire *as* sexuality' as a site at which 'race' can be temporarily fixed in place, conquered, and known. This fixity mirrors a prominent structure of desire itself (explored in more detail in chapter 2, namely repetition compulsion, a dynamic that is then heightened by the demands made by online interfaces to specify a sexuality, by stating as unequivocally as possible *exactly* who and what it is you're into.

For Omi & Winant, although they are historically anchored, 'race' - and the processes of racialisation that (re)produce it - endures as a, "fundamental organizing principle", of contemporary societies (1986/2014: 66). Omi & Winant's theory focuses on the racial formation of social structures, which they

define in terms of “sites” or “regions of social life with a coherent set of constitutive social relations”. The emphasis on coherence and structure is not intended to distract us from the fundamental historical fact that the meanings which stick to racial formations are always evolving; not least in response to the fluctuating demands of shifting regimes of capitalism⁴⁷. A key “site” or “region” of racial formation is culture: “In the cultural realm, dress, music, art, language, and indeed the very concept of ‘taste’ has been shaped by the racial consciousness and racial dynamics” (1986/2014: 67). The reference to “taste” thus prompts us to grapple explicitly with the fact that in our present racialised society, *(desire as) sexuality is a racial formation*. For one, “taste” is often now framed in terms of ‘preference’, which as I explored above, works as a consumerist stand-in and convenient euphemism for the messier business of sexuality. Another reason to consider desire a site of racial formation is the enduring prevalence of endogamy and the relative rarity of ‘transracial’ intimacies; the choice of a partner and the ‘racial’ identity of a given subject’s progeny both reinforce and constitute the subject’s ‘racial’ identity. This in turn reflects the proximity of ‘desire as sexuality’ to identity. The omission of “desire” or “sexuality” from Omi & Winant’s list of formations actually seems somewhat glaring, since, I would argue, libidinal desires and sexuality often underpin the other (highly sensual) categories of racial formation that they *do* reference.

Crucially for the purposes of thinking about racialised desires *as* sexuality, racial formation theory emphasises that ‘racial’ dynamics unfold at both individual (micro) and social (macro) levels and stresses the reciprocity between individuals and collective social relations. Some ways in which we might think about this dynamic are in terms of how any one individual’s racialised sexuality contributes towards the perpetuation of ‘race’, but also about how micro erotic desires exist in a dialectic relationship with the macro-level structuring of society in ‘racial’ terms.

⁴⁷ E.g. from post-war social democracy, to neoliberalism, to contemporary “surveillance capitalism” (Zuboff, 2019).

The racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' as psychic and embodied

While an emphasis on the social and historical construction of 'race' is epistemologically vital and an important intervention against biological or genetic 'racial' ideology; a strictly discursive formulation does little to capture the lived experience of 'race'. As Sharon Patricia Holland argues, moving us from a social constructionist to a psychic and phenomenological perspective, "race may not be on the body, but it certainly is "in" it" (2012: 20). Picking up Crenshaw's nuancing of social constructionist work on 'race' (Crenshaw, 1991), Holland argues that it is crucial that, "the social construction of race defines a nuanced politic – one in which ideas about race have material force and therefore phenomenological meaning" (2012: 23). 'Race' and 'desire as sexuality' are psychic and embodied, symbolic and material, phenomena - consequently, the racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' framework attempts to capture these different, but interwoven, registers of racialised self-experience. This again places the framework within a 'quare' perspective, which seeks to think psychic life always-already in terms of the body that contains and inflects it, acting as a pre-eminent vehicle for subjective meaning-making⁴⁸. E. Patrick Johnson formulates this as the fact that, "'quare' studies grounds the discursive process of mediated identification and subjectivity in a political praxis that speaks to the material existence of "colored" bodies" (2005: 136). Crucially, (racialised) bodies are also by definition construction through a dynamic of relation: "The body I believe has to be theorized in ways that not only describe the ways in which it is brought into being but also what it does once it is constituted and the relationship between it and other bodies around it" (Johnson, 2005: 136). 'Desires as sexuality' and the relations to which they give rise constitute a privileged terrain for the relationality of racialised bodies (and psyches), and thus might provide an illuminating rubric through which to consider 'quare' studies' epistemological agenda (Johnson, 2005).

⁴⁸ Incidentally, it was (what I experienced as) the absence of a material body in the sub-discipline of critical psychology in which I was previously working that brought me into psychosocial studies (and psychoanalysis in particular), in search of a space in which I could have my cake and eat it, weaving together the critical discursive work I had been doing up to that point with a properly embodied subject; something I would argue is especially necessary for a project about sexuality.

This psychic *and* embodied perspective is also echoed by Gail Lewis, who argues that, “our imaginations, identities, and ways and visions of being in the world are structured through highly racialised and gendered identifications, discourses and positions” (2007: 875), such that race may be seen as a series of “acts of becoming”, or social scripts, echoing Butler’s formulation of gender. ‘Race’ may thus constitute a sort of performance, the material for which is drawn from myriad representational and intersubjective sources; a performance predicated on the psychic process of identification, that at once racialises and gives life to the flesh through mimesis and the repetition of acts. Shirley-Anne Tate formulates this explicitly as “race performativity”, which she defines, drawing on Butler’s work as, “the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names [and] that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (Tate, 2015/2018: 173; Butler, 1993: 2). The importance of discourses and representations is thus clearly acknowledged, but both need to be understood as working through psyches and bodies, rendering both as sites of racial formation. Crucially, Lewis complicates the relationship between racialised psyche and body, noting that, “despite a commonsense that suggests otherwise, our bodies do not automatically prescribe any automatic belongings and nor can our conceptions of self be read off from our bodies in any simple way” (875). Thus, while the body remains an important site of subjectivity - one that is crucial to the ways in which subjects become racialised - there is not any linear relationship between the social positioning of bodies and their psychic life, a fact only accented if we take into account the multiplicity of identifications and their propensity to instantiate border crossings. As a theory built on identifications as the means through which subjects construct a (racialised) self and (racialised) desired other, I believe the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’ framework can help to accent the multiplicity and complexity of the subject’s investments in ‘race’, elucidating some of the ways in which ‘race’ reproduces itself in the process.

One possible consequence of the psychic life of ‘race’ – as Frosh (2002) and Hook (2005) note – is that appeals to ‘rational’ argument, such as pointing out that

'race' is a social and historical construct, may do little to diminish its appeal. This idea of 'race' as a psychic investment might then be useful for considering the contemporary endurance of 'racial' classifications at the level of epistemologies, ideas, and material social structures. Framing the racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' in terms of the psychic life of 'race' therefore also speaks to the viscosity and intractability of 'race'. In reflecting on this intractability, Holland explicitly links it to the psychic life of 'race', arguing for an approach that, "seeks to normalize racism, to move away from "good" or "bad" assessments of its agents (black and white) and toward an understanding of its psychic life and how that life "glues a particular racial order"" (2012: 32)⁴⁹. This state of affairs also prompts the questions, "*What makes race work for us? Why do we need it?*" (Holland, 2012: 32). These are highly pertinent questions for the present project, and another useful way of formulating them might be, what work does 'race' *do and perform*? As a site that becomes saturated by psychic investments, I would argue that 'desire as sexuality' might well represent a terrain on which we can begin to unpick these questions and construct some tentative responses.

The racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' as a critical race theory

Another way of thinking about 'race' has been to construe it in terms of its relationship to racism. For Darder and Torres (and Holland, who cites their work) this relationship is ontological, and racism comes first: "'race', simply put, is the child of racism" (2004: 100). This formulation also usefully retrains our attention to the ways that 'race' is produced in and through racist and racialising acts, including statements on dating profiles, and who we decide to fuck (and why). As the White supremacist societies of the West have nominally embraced contested concepts such as "multiculturalism" and "racial equality", racism has increasingly mutated. As Holland notes, "No longer tethered by legal restrictions and cultural iconography, racism in the late twentieth century moves to its underground bunker – if it cannot be seen or treated by legal jurisprudence then it simply does not exist" (2012: 28). This move underground has facilitated what Bonilla-Silva calls "color-blind racism" or "racism without racists", which he

⁴⁹ The phrase, "glues a particular racial order", comes from Bonilla-Silva (2002/2010).

defines in terms of its “slipperiness, apparent nonracialism and ambivalence” (2002/2010: 41). Interestingly all the qualities Bonilla-Silva lists have also been ascribed to Whiteness itself, and the latter’s unequivocal ‘success’ might suggest just what an effective strategy “colour-blind” racism represents. Accompanying “colour-blind racism” has been what Michael Billig (1988: 94) calls, “the norm against prejudice”, which induces forms of racism constructed rhetorically around disclaimers such as, “I’m not racist but...”. This is also captured in Riggs’ (2013) study of anti-Asian rhetoric on the profiles of White Australian *Gaydar* users, in which 100 of the 403 profiles he analysed used apologies as a disclaimer, following the approximate formula, “I’m sorry but...”, to frame their explicit exclusion of Asian men. Reflecting the way that discussions of racialised sexualities both contravene the ‘colour-blind’ norm against overt discussion of ‘race’, and convey a sense of affective ambivalence on the part of White sexual subjects, Gregorio Smith notes, “While most discussions about racism are disguised with color blindness, discussions of sexual racism are typically blatant, since many white people do not see racial preferences as racist. Despite this, they still engage in rhetorical strategies of avoidance and deflection regarding sexual racism” (2018: 121). The ambivalence belied by this simultaneous disavowal and surreptitious acknowledgement of racism in statements of ‘racial preference’ speaks to the disingenuousness of “colour-blind” ‘race’ culture, which purports not to see ‘race’ – and racism – while sensing, practicing and profiting from it, and working anxiously to occlude it.

If the racialisation of desire is to be understood as a question of racism, then racism might also need to be reconfigured from what I would argue is its most common-sense formulation, which frames it in terms of aberrant individuals, intentionality, and *spectacularity*. Rather, I would argue, we need to frame racism – and the racialisation of ‘desire as sexuality’ - in terms of critical race theory. As Holland notes on the subject of critical race theory’s turn towards the ordinary and everyday: “The turn toward the quotidian is not one that focuses on prejudice but rather on the discretionary acts and, yes, racist practices that each of us make in everyday decisions such as choosing someone to sit beside on the subway, selecting a mate or sperm donor, or developing a list of subjects for an

academic study. The autonomy usually attached to erotic choices should be reevaluated to think through these attachments” (2012: 7). This quote clearly also attests to the pertinence of a critical race frame for apprehending the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’. In limning both the ordinariness and everyday nature of racism, critical race theory emphasises that society is absolutely saturated with ‘race’ and racism, and that both ethically and epistemologically, we need to move beyond considerations of the *intentionality* of racism towards a focus on its *effects*. These two points are linked: it is precisely because society is so structured and saturated by ‘race’ that subjects with the best of intentions can nonetheless perpetuate racisms. hooks formulates this in terms of, “the reality that goodwill can co-exist with racist thinking and white supremacist attitudes” (1992: 16)⁵⁰.

This point is crucial to the debate about the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’, since it provides us with the means to widen the frame from the intentionality of individual sexual subjects who pursue their racialised desires in more and less problematic ways (although the effects of these ‘problematic ways’ remain an important concern), towards a more profound consideration of how power as manifest in discourses of ‘race’ and racism works in and through erotic desire. As Holland argues, “The desire to see ourselves as exempt from racist violence, no matter how small, is part of the same logic that attempts to excise life choices, erotic choices, from these larger systems. What we would have called racism is now “personal choice” or becomes mildly prejudicial... The erotic therefore, touches upon that aspect of racist practices that cannot be accounted for *as* racist but must be understood as something else altogether” (2012: 27). This suggests amongst other things that in tarrying with the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’, we are dealing with something slippery and in need of constant (re-)articulation if it is to be adequately grasped, parsed, and critiqued.

⁵⁰ Holland quotes Jennifer Culbert, who argues that, “Most horrific acts committed by one person against another occur as small thoughtless gestures under mundane, if not trite, circumstances” (quoted in Holland, 2012: 1). Holland thus formulates “racism” – one of the most stunningly recurrent of “horrific acts” as “almost always articulated as an everyday occurrence, as pedestrian rather than spectacular” (2012: 3).

Applying the RoDaS framework at two field sites

In applying the RoDaS framework, I present two ‘field sites’ with two distinct methodologies. However, both the theoretically-driven thematic analysis (chapter 4) and the psychoanalytically-informed analysis of biographical interviews (chapter 5) share the conceptual underpinnings of the RoDaS framework, which has been adapted to each in quite specific ways, which I elaborate below.

The first field site, presented in chapter 4, is a social-media and networking platform at which racialised sexualities meet (and sometimes collide). My choice of Grindr as a site at which to track the racialisation of ‘desire as sexuality’ reflects (among other things): its pre-eminence as a site of gay male/MSM sociality; the prevalence of ‘race’ and racialised sexualities on the app; and, reflecting the first two points, the prominence and ubiquity of Grindr as a point of reference in debates about ‘racial preference’ (see, for example: Jones, 2016; and douchebagsofgrindr 2019). My second field site – a corpus of individual interviews - then attempts to engage *the lived experience* of racialised ‘desire as sexuality’ (chapter 5), and I frame the interview encounters as ‘staged snapshots of subjectivity’, both narrated by the interview participants *and co-constructed* with me as the researcher.

In following the influence of the ‘RoDaS’ framework through my field methodologies, it is perhaps useful to think again about the four registers on which I argue the racialisation of ‘desire as sexuality’ unfolds. The first is the rendering of infant desire as adolescent (and adult) sexuality, a process that privileges the psyche as a potential site of agency and resistance as much as subjectification, and which centres the influence of individual biographies. The second is the apprehension of historical discourses and representations of ‘race’ as a site and motor of sexuality, the ‘trans-generational’ inheritance that co-constitutes sexualities in White supremacist societies. The third register is the construction of a narrative-of-self, privileging social-intelligibility and fixity, which gets called ‘sexuality’, and which highlights the ontological stakes inherent

in the occidental model of sex and erotic desire. The final register is the eroticisation of the subject's submission to the social, which orbits and erotically-freights the preceding registers. This final register is difficult to track in any significant way through the methodologies I present here. However, in my theoretically-driven thematic analysis of Grindr, I am able to track registers two and three of the 'RoDaS' framework, as I map racialised sexualities as historicised formations with contemporary intersections (in this case, the gay male community and MSM public on Grindr in the latter part of the 2010s), and sexuality as a narrative-of-self, comprised of clearly delineated 'preferences' and prejudices. After my framework, I formulate the authors of Grindr profiles as dynamic psychosocial subjects, and thus I simultaneously accent the (dis)identifications to which discourses *may* give rise. Furthermore, and following the 'RoDaS' framework's centring of critical race theory, the emphasis here is on the effects rather than the intentions of profile texts. Shifting to the interviews in chapter 5, I am able to incorporate an additional register of the 'RoDaS' framework, namely the importance of biography and the re-rendering of early experiences of desire e.g. attachments to always-already racialised parental figures, as latent motors of later sexuality. Mapping (dis)identifications across the life course as represented by participant narratives, I am able to introduce a significant biographical dimension, accenting particularity in the face in the our collective 'racial' pasts. The interviews nonetheless also attend to – and generate ample evidence of – the second and third registers of the 'RoDaS' framework as the persistence of historically anchored 'racial' tropes and the construction of a fixed, intelligible 'sexuality' anchor my analyses.

The two methodologies are also divergent but complimentary in the way they treat data items within the broader data set. In chapter 4, I aggregate data items (profiles) and read across them, while in chapter 5 I take each data item (interview) in isolation. While the aggregated approach has the benefit of marshalling evidence from multiple sources, it also risks diluting the particularity that I am arguing defines (a psychosocial) subjectivity. This particularity produces a richness and granularity that is much better served by the 'case' approach in chapter 5. I hope that taken together, these two chapters

will prove compelling as a ‘real world’ application of the RoDaS theoretical frame.

I call my approach throughout this project hybridly empirical-theoretical. To do so is to acknowledge both the scale of theoretical work as a constituent part of this project (which started out as something more straightforwardly empirical); but also the indebtedness of the empirical ‘field’ work to theory. I position an empirical-theoretical hybridised approach as quintessentially psychosocial in the nascent tradition in which I have encountered it. While both data sets – Grindr profiles and research interviews – could have been analysed using a ‘bottom-up’ approach of supposedly ‘letting the data speak for itself’ - a position that is usually performed under the heading of ‘inductive’ analysis – I would argue that ultimately, the researcher will always need some theory to parse the themes it is possible to generate from the data. Further, in being explicit about using theory as a starting point, I am able to ‘put my cards on the table’ about what precisely informs my reading practice, in a way that inductive approaches typically eschew.

Field site 1: Reading the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’ on Grindr: a theoretically-driven thematic analysis of 100 Grindr profiles

In what follows, I begin by considering the epistemological underpinnings of my methodology, which draws on the ‘RoDaS’ framework with a view to applying it in the field, privileging in particular the historicity of ‘desire *as* sexuality’, and its psychic mediation, which also creates spaces for agency and resistance. I explore the ethics of my approach, and delineate the process of collecting my data. I then move into a broad consideration of my methodology, taking time to define what type of thematic analysis I am aiming at (acknowledging that there are many), before moving on to a more granular discussion of my coding process and analysis. Coded themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 1.

Epistemology

Within the scope of this project, I present Grindr as a site at which racialised sexualities are enacted and co-constructed, performed and re-inscribed. With millions of users globally, and many tens of thousands in London, Grindr can be configured as a primary spatial node in the wider gay male/MSM 'community'. Configuring Grindr profiles as performative "acts of becoming" (Lewis, 2007), which bring the racialised, gendered subject into being in the process of their enunciation (*as enactment*), I also position the Grindr profile as a site at which the very 'stuff' of 'race' and gender is re-inscribed and made. By the logic of my own RoDaS framework, I also suggest that Grindr is primarily a site at which we can read for *sexuality* (rather than desire – used here psychoanalytically): and since the profile texts are conscious attempts to delineate (that is, name, fix and regulate) desire, they constitute *constitutive articulations* of sexuality.

In my analysis of Grindr profiles, perhaps my overarching aim – reflecting both the RoDaS framework and the methodology of my theoretically-driven thematic analysis outlined below – is to track the ways that our 'racial' histories - those anchored in European colonialism, American chattel slavery and the wider project of a racialised formation of rational, hierarchical, modernity - move through 'desire *as* sexuality'. Given that I am only engaging with the texts of Grindr profiles (i.e. I lack any further knowledge about the profiles' authors) my analysis is restricted to thinking through the *subject positions* that the profiles enact and facilitate, rather than making claims toward being able to grapple with or understand the *subjectivity* of the profiles' authors. I predicate this distinction between subject positions and subjectivity on the formulation provided by Oliver (2004). Reading her work, I suggest that 'subject positions' are the social locations to which the subject is discursively consigned (defining 'discursively' here as both the frameworks of intelligibility and their materialisation in institutional practices), and through which they experience the world, by virtue of their body, identity, and associated demographic classifications. Crucially for thinking about Grindr as a site of interaction, subject positions also mediate the ways in which subjects encounter each other. Subjects can also take-up and

generate subject positions through the selection of discourses that position the subject and the object/other in particular ways. Subjectivity, by contrast, is the subject's lived experience as a psychosocial being with a capacity for (something like) agency (or a degree of 'movability' that Oliver refers to as "response-ability" [2004, xv]; it is informed and inflected by subject positions, but inevitably exceeds them by virtue of the subject's psychic dynamism, the range and complexity of their investments, and the particularity of their biography (to name but three prominent factors in-play). In relation to my analysis, this means I read Grindr profiles in terms of the discursive and material *effects* of the texts, thinking about the functionality of discourses and the range of possibilities to which they give rise, but without making any totalising claims about the intentions or motivations of the profiles' authors (I discuss this attendance to 'latent' meanings in my elaboration of my methodology below).

Developing from my theoretical intervention, in my theoretically-driven thematic analysis of Grindr profiles, I read for racialised sexualities as formations within which spectres and sediments of our historical racial inheritance *condense*. In this regard, I again found Sharon Holland's work in *The Erotic Life of Racism* resonant and instructive. As Holland argues, "One of the primary truths of African Americanist intellectual work is that we are not yet done with slavery", and, she adds, "We are not done with slavery because we have yet to thoroughly investigate its psychic life" (2012: 31). This is in direct contrast to the (neo-) liberal tendency to frame time as linear and history as a narrative of progress, which, specifically in relation to 'race', may be deployed to facilitate a posture of "leaving all that (slavery, colonialism) in the past". Similarly, Scott (drawing on Marcuse (1955/1987) argues that in liberal, occidental societies: "a genetically and culturally inherited tendency to the perception of linear time necessitates a stance of transcendence towards that aspect of the temporal which is called the past... *distancing (in order) to master* – and therefore, potentially, it necessitates a stance of exploitation with respect to the past and those who lived it" (2010: 222). While Scott suggests that we all risk exploiting the past (his own argument more specifically concerns the re-staging of historical traumas for the generation of contemporary sexual pleasures), I think his argument prompts us to consider

to *what ends* and *for whom* precisely a formulation of linear time and historical transcendence serves; with respect to wanting to leave slavery and colonialism in the past, it appears to be the interests of White supremacy, an impulse thus deserving of the highest suspicion and critique. Consigning 'racial' violence and injury to the past then, facilitates the "colour-blind" ideology that in turn operates as a smokescreen for contemporary racisms (Bonilla-Silva, 2002/2010).

In my reading of Grindr and Grindr profiles then, I argue that racialised sexuality (or desire *as* sexuality) is a pre-eminent component of the contemporary psychic life of 'race', with sexualities constituting a 'site of condensation' for our 'racial' pasts. I suggest that as a 'site of condensation', sexuality is saturated by history while also reconstituting it as a specifically contemporary formation. This is why I also attempt to read the profiles in terms of their imbrication in a wider matrix of MSM/gay male culture (which as I attempted to delineate in chapter 1, is itself always-already bound up with the colonial). The dominance of North American representations of 'race' and Blackness – thinking especially about television, film, literature, and pornography - means that its 'racial' history has a wider global resonance, inflecting the ways that 'race' and Blackness are understood globally, and especially within another Anglophone country like the U.K. But Britain, of course, has an abundance of its own 'racial' history, including legacies of enslavement and colonialism - the colonies profoundly shaping the society, politics, cultures, desires and sexualities of the 'metropole' (Hall, 2002; 2006) – which takes in hundreds of years of Empire, followed by a twentieth century defined by decline, ambivalent and often violent responses to post-war immigration and "multiculturalism", and latterly by a socio-political affect that Gilroy calls "postcolonial melancholia" (Gilroy, 2004). Perhaps one of the most obvious cleavages between the UK and the US has been the extent to which 'race' so saturates every aspect of life in both countries, yet in the former there is arguably a greater reluctance to engage with, or even name, 'race'; as though ignorance were a courtesy rather than a terrain on which racism is nurtured and nourished. Crucially, to say that 'desire *as* sexuality' is – and must be – historicised is not to argue that we are merely captive to history or that the

present faithfully reproduces the past in always-linear and predictable ways. As Holland notes, the point of an approach, which formulates the present as the aftermath of colonialism and slavery, “is not to pit the past against the present in a dysfunctional causal relationship” (2012: 31). Besides enhancing the efficacy of my analysis, this is again why I consider profiles in terms of *both* their historical resonances *and* the contemporary (especially the racialised gay male/MSM community) contexts in which they unfold. My reading of Grindr profiles incorporates the three primary registers of the RoDaS framework by attending to: (1) the psychic life of discourses, speculating about the play of identifications and phantasy to which discourses and subject positions may give rise (although this remains limited by a lack of contextual information about profile authors); (2) the endurance of racialised historical discourses and the contemporary resonances these acquire in particular contexts; and (3) the sedimentation of sexuality as a rigid, fixed formation and narrative of self, although the profiles also testify to the degree to which such fixity shows a considerable degree of variability.

Ethics

The ethical implications of working with texts such as Grindr profiles remain somewhat ambiguous. This is acknowledged by the British Psychological Society’s ‘Ethics Guidelines for Conducting Internet-mediated Research’ (2017), which nonetheless provides some minimal guidance that is useful for this project. One of the major areas of ambiguity this document addresses is the ‘publicness’ of online spaces. Arguably, Grindr is a public space, and I am a user of the app. As a researcher with lived experience of the app, my own view is that Grindr profiles are publicly available information, which should be treated in a similar way to information published in other online public forums such as (public) tweets. The BPS Guidelines suggest that the litmus test for a ‘public space’ is whether users of that space, ‘would expect to be observed by strangers’ (2017:25). My view is that for Grindr, this is unequivocally the case. The Guidelines also suggest that the best way to mediate any potential harm when working in digital public spaces is to ensure anonymity and confidentiality for

authors of the data being analysed, a principle to which I am committed and adhered to throughout this work. It is notable though that while I had planned to change any identifying information in the profiles during the process of transcription into the Excel Workbook (reproduced in Appendix 2), in the event, there was no such information across the entire dataset, which I suggest says something about the way Grindr profiles are treated as ‘public’, and thus approached ‘defensively’ by users, who know not to include identifying personal information. Nonetheless, it remains an open question and an important area of on-going consideration for digital researchers to think seriously about how to work with publicly available data published online. To further enhance the anonymity of profile authors, and following discussion of online research ethics in my PhD viva, I also decided to delete the ‘age’ column from the Excel workbook in which I present the full data set in Appendix A. Ultimately I felt this information was superfluous and could pose some (albeit minimal) risk of a reader identifying profile authors – or, perhaps more likely, presuming to do so.

The BPS Guidelines (2017) also prompt the researcher to consider who owns the data being analysed. Grindr profiles are secondary (pre-existing) data and legally, the owner of the data is Grindr, not the profile author. As such, I might have considered contacting Grindr to ask for permission to conduct research on the app. In the event, I followed my own past precedent (having previously conducted research on Grindr in 2014) and the convention established by other researchers in this area, which is that dating profiles can be treated as publicly available information. Of the many studies I have read on this topic, I can find no indication of authors having contacted the website or app they are studying to ask for permission to conduct their research. I sought no commercial gain from collecting and analysing this data (unlike other analyses of publicly available social media data conducted by psychologists such as those associated with ‘Cambridge Analytica’ – for which the BPS Guidelines seem, in the first instance, to have been published as a response), and I believe my research answers the first principle of ethical research in psychology, which is that the benefits of conducting any research should outweigh any risks (BPS, 2017).

Another important point to make about Grindr, which I believe mediates the ethical concerns raised here, is that unlike a discussion forum hosted on a permanent webpage, with a URL, which could be accessible or 'searchable' to the public at any time, Grindr is a dynamic and transient space. It is highly unlikely that the profiles I collected even still exist in the form in which I collected them – profile texts, photos and other information are constantly being updated, profiles (and accounts) created and deleted. And due to Grindr's GPS functionality, nor could a reader of this project search for any of the profiles I have analysed; when a user logs in, they only ever see whichever users are closest to their phone's GPS location.

Beyond the specifics of researching online spaces, the process of data collection and storage also raised a number of additional ethical questions that needed to be grappled with, especially in light of GDPR regulations, which were passed into law in the UK during the period I was writing-up my analysis. The Grindr profile I used to collect the dataset was the designated research one I also used to recruit interview participants, and it stated explicitly my reasons for being on Grindr. I collected data by taking 'screen shots' on my phone, and during the process of data collection I stored these on my phone, before transcribing their content into the Excel workbook I reproduce in Appendix A. During the process of writing-up my analysis, I retained the screenshots as I include the profile photos as part of the 'text' of profiles, which I am analysing. Once the write-up was completed, I transferred the screenshot file from my phone to a password-protected folder on my external hard drive and deleted the folder from my phone. In retrospect, a better information governance protocol would have been to continually transfer these screenshots onto a password protected file – either on my laptop or external hard drive – during the process of data collection. With hindsight this would have been a more safety-aware approach, adding an additional layer to data protection and ensuring a more robust stance of researcher responsibility. Reflecting GDPR's requirement to provide a clear rationale for why data is being retained, I propose to keep the original screenshots for a period of 3 years from final submission of this project, to cover the period in which I anticipate

disseminating my research through publication, and in case of challenge by readers and other researchers.

Collecting my dataset: 100 Grindr profiles that mention 'race'

I undertook my data collection for this strand of enquiry between November 2017 and October 2018, taking screenshots of profiles that referenced 'race', until I had collected a total of 100. Although this number was arbitrary, I settled on it as I felt it was large enough to facilitate my reading for patterns across profiles and spotting "thematic clusters" (I explore this concept in more detail below), while also capturing the diversity of 'guises' under which 'race' appears on Grindr. As I discuss above, I collected the profiles through a dedicated 'research' account on Grindr, which I had set-up to recruit participants for the biographical interviews. While I used this profile passively - waiting for Grindr users to respond to my recruitment pitch, rather than approaching them directly - I also used it to scan and collect profiles, looking out for those that referenced 'race' in any way. The reason for keeping this criterion so broad was to avoid anticipating how 'race' might be talked about and how racialising and racist discourses might be deployed on Grindr.

Once the screenshots were collected, I transcribed their 'textual' content into an Excel workbook (this is reproduced in Appendix A). For each profile, I recorded the user's age, ethnicity and sexual position (if stated), as well as their profile title and profile text. The range of data I recorded reflects the fact that, at the time, I wasn't entirely sure how I would seek to analyse them. I recorded the ethnicity of the Grindr user making the 'racial' reference in order to capture the racialised positionality of the enunciator; I noted users' ages as I was initially unsure if I would attempt to spot generational patterns across the profiles (again, I have now deleted this column from the Excel worksheet); and sexual position I considered relevant as an admittedly ambiguous aspect of self-identity, which could nonetheless be related to racialised and gendered positions e.g. a White 'bottom' Grindr user seeking a Black 'top'. I wrote up the titles and discursive content of each profile in full.

Methodology

Once I had collected my dataset I began the work of coding and analysing the profiles. The approach I took most closely resembles a version of the thematic analysis methodology outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) in a now classic paper from within qualitative psychology. In that paper, the authors attempt to define a methodology that they argue is widely-used but poorly understood, and often left unnamed. They nonetheless emphasise that thematic analysis is an approach that is flexible and not overly prescriptive, and as such avoids the researcher becoming mired in so-called “methodolatory”. A theme is defined as capturing, “something important about the data in relation to the research... and represents some level of *patterned* response of meaning within the data set” (2006: 82). Crucially though, against a simplistic quantitative approach that focuses on frequency of recurrence, Braun and Clarke emphasise that, “researcher judgement is necessary to determine what a theme is”, and that, “the ‘keyness’ of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures – but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question” (2006: 82). While the flexibility and freedom from “methodolatory” afforded by thematic analysis greatly appealed to me, it is nonetheless important that such flexibility doesn’t come at the expense of criticality and rigour. In the latter case then, I defer to Reicher and Taylor (2005: 549) who suggest that for a thematic analysis, “rigour lies in devising a systematic method whose assumptions are congruent with the way one conceptualizes the subject matter”. In the context of this research, such rigour was achieved by ensuring that my coding methodology (enumerated in detail below) reflected the conceptual assumptions of my ‘RoDaS’ model and my formulation of the psychosocial subject. In turn I produced broad themes (Whiteness, Racialised gender, and resistance and agency – see table 1 below for more detail) which reflected the ‘RoDaS’ framework’s emphasis on historicity, the indissolubility of ‘race’ and gender and the impossibility of excluding ‘race’ from the frame of sexuality, and the necessity of considering discourses in terms of subjective mediation and the subject’s capacity response-ability (Oliver, 2004, xv).

While there are many different ways to do thematic analysis, my own approach is one that:

- Is deductive, 'top-down', and both analyst- and theoretically-driven. I position myself and my own readings as crucial to the final analysis, and I start with theory first, and then use this explicitly as a frame through which to read and code the data
- As such, it is also an approach that focuses on *particular* features of the data set (of 100 profiles), rather than trying to faithfully reflect *all* of the data. While this approach primarily reflects my desire to deploy my theory in the field, it also allows me to privilege depth and complexity over 'covering all the bases' that I might otherwise have read in the dataset.
- Is concerned with 'latent' as much as manifest meanings. As Braun & Clarke note, "a thematic analysis at the latent level goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (2006: 84). In my own work, these 'latent' meanings are represented across three registers. The first is my formulation of 'race', and more specifically racism – after critical 'race theory – as a matter of effects rather than intentions. As such I am less concerned with what the author intended to convey than the range of responses their profile elicits. I believe this more faithfully attends to the ways that Grindr profiles have effects- on fellow – racialised - Grindr users, and on Grindr as a racialised space. The second latent register is the psychoanalytic one, in which drawing on a queer-of-colour revision of (dis)identification (Muñoz, 1999), I speculate about the subject positions (in phantasy and *IRL*) to which the statements articulated on Grindr profiles might give rise⁵¹. A

⁵¹ Drawing a line between my emphasis on the latent content of the profiles in my thematic analysis methodology and my wider reading in Black studies, I also frame my emphasis on silences, omission, gaps, and *registers* of meaning and experience in terms of Sylvia Wynter's formulation of a reading practice she calls "decipherment". This reading practice is not about analysing texts for an *essential* meaning, but positions the text in terms of what it *does*. As Wynter formulates it: "Rather than seeking to "rhetorically demystify", a deciphering turn... seeks to identify not what texts and their signifying practices can be interpreted to mean but what they

final, third register of latent meaning represented in my analysis is my attendance to what is left unsaid by profile authors, which becomes as important as what it is actually said; absence as crucial as presence. This might be done through parsing the ‘missing’ elements of a discourse as it is deployed by a particular Grindr user, or speculating about the racialised objects that are indirectly and implicitly constructed by a profile’s manifest content (e.g. how an author’s description of Whiteness implicitly constructs a Black or non-White object in opposition to itself).

Having established this methodological approach, I executed the following steps to code and analyse my dataset, representing an expedited iteration of Braun & Clarke’s model (2006):

1. **Familiarising myself with the data.** This stage involved immersion in the data, comprised of repeated readings done without making any attempt to code. I nonetheless read the profiles in an *active* way, searching for meanings and patterns, and with my theoretical framework in mind.
2. **Generating initial codes.** While these can be somewhat difficult to define, Boyatzis describes initial codes as “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (1998: 63). Essentially, even though I had the RoDaS theoretical framework in mind, I coded at this stage on a more descriptive register, seeking to avoid becoming too conceptual. However, since my analysis was theoretically-driven, it was difficult to avoid moving into the conceptual, and thus steps 2 and 3 (see immediately below) merged somewhat. Important to note at this phase is that I gave full and equal attention to each data item (Grindr profile text), and that I sought to code as thoroughly and broadly as possible, without taking a view at this stage on which profiles and codes would end up in

can be deciphered to do” (1992/1995: 266-267). Such an approach also seems to me to echo the aim of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Willig, 2013) to deconstruct discourses in terms of their functionality and the range of possibilities they generate for the speaker (for which intentionality and consciousness are not necessary conditions).

my final, thematic, write-up. I also treated each profile as though it had an inherent internal wholeness or integrity; that is, without extrapolating parts of the whole and treating them out of context (this is also reflected in the fact I largely reproduce full profile texts in the final write-up). I conducted this phase of the research on an A3 print-out of the Excel worksheet contained in Appendix A, drawing arrows and writing codes around the cells.

3. **Searching for themes.** At this stage I began to cluster the descriptive codes into more conceptually-related bundles of data items (Grindr profiles), which spoke to broader themes and resonated with my RoDaS framework. In Table 1 (below), I present the themes and the sub-themes I arrived at. Again, these themes were not necessarily a question of the frequency of recurrence - although in all instances they qualify as a patterned response in that several profiles fitted the theme/sub-theme. Rather, I arrived at them as I felt they said interesting things *in relation to* my RoDaS framework.
4. **Reviewing themes.** Braun and Clarke note that in evaluating whether themes ‘work’, the researcher should attend to, “*internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity... Data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes*” (2006: 90). Having assessed my themes and sub-themes in light of these criteria, I also re-read the entire dataset again to ensure that I had not missed any data items that would fit thematic structure.
5. **Writing up.** The process of writing-up involves elaborating on the themes and sub-themes providing an opportunity to iterate and work them out further and to think more deeply about the profile texts I selected to exemplify them. In the course of writing-up, I continually noticed new things in the profiles, which enriched the final analytical narrative I arrive at in the second part of chapter 4.

Table 1: Themes and sub-themes generated through the application of the RoDaS framework to my dataset of 100 Grindr profiles:

Theme/sub-theme	Whiteness	Racialised gender/gendered 'race'	Subjective mediation, resistance, and agency
1.	Defining Whiteness (as not-Blackness)	Crossdressing and 'race'	"Black Grindr"
2.	Commodification, fantasies of ownership, and the 'fungibility' of Black bodies	"BBCs" and effete Asians: neo-colonial tropes and racialised, gendered, sexual stereotypes	"Not into White guys"
3.	"Sick with desire for the Other"		Problematizing and reclaiming 'preference'

A final point of note about my thematic analysis is that in the first part of chapter 4, I engage in an extended theorisation of what I call Grindr's 'racial life'. My aims here are twofold: to evoke Grindr for the reader as a pre-eminent, always-already racialised, site of sociality and "infrastructure of intimacy" (Race, 2015a) for gay men and MSM; *and*, to conjure the racialised conditions of authorship – particularly attending to technical-infrastructural, user experience (UX), and cultural and community dimensions – under which Grindr profiles are created. In turn, these conditions of authorship are intended to provide a context for reading the profiles and thematic analysis that follows in the second part of the chapter. To facilitate my racialised theorisation of Grindr, I draw most heavily on work from media and communications studies, sociology, and queer studies. In seeking to conjure – at length – the context in which the profile texts are written and presented, it may read as though I take too long to 'get to the point' of the analysis itself. However, I would argue that my own approach addresses a flaw in the majority of discourse analytic work – certainly in the field of psychology – in which such contexts are inadequately theorised, undermining – in my view – the overall analysis. A Grindr profile is not just 'another text', it is a quite specific one, and necessitates being thought about as such. Given that the focus of my analysis is 'race' and the ways 'race' and (desire *as*) racialised sexuality are

constructed on Grindr, I believe understanding the wider 'racial life' of Grindr is imperative for properly apprehending the profile texts.

Reflexivity

The theoretical speculations and analyses of profiles I engage here are also inevitably informed by my own peer participation and personal experiences of Grindr. My first recollection of Grindr stems from the summer of 2009, when rumours swirled about an app that would connect you with the nearest iPhone-enabled gays in your vicinity. In this nascent form, Grindr was restricted to the iPhone iOS platform, and the still relatively small number of (relatively affluent) iPhone owners, and was yet to accrue the critical mass of users that defines its appeal today. When I bought my first iPhone in 2010 (in no small part influenced by the opportunity to finally try out Grindr for myself), I became an active user. Pretty much immediately I felt that Grindr transformed my sex and dating life. After an erotically arid few years spent negotiating the physical spaces of London's gay scene, I found at my fingertips many hundreds and thousands of men looking to chat, date and, often, hook-up. Using Grindr was not without significant frustrations and challenges - chats that 'went nowhere'; the difficulty of building trust between anonymous strangers behind smartphone screens; the need to build resilience in the face of inevitably frequent rejections – but in terms of the numbers and range of men with which it facilitated encounters, I was left with an emphatic feeling of gratitude at having the good fortune to live in the age of Grindr. This was only reinforced when I met my most recent long-term partner on Grindr in 2013: a non-gay-identified, Black queer man who (before we met) could count on one hand the number of times he had been inside a gay bar. I make the latter qualification to highlight that without Grindr, I don't know where else we would have engaged each other - a literary reading, or an academic talk perhaps, but in my experience (and being prone to diffidence), these kinds of serendipitous encounter are much more romcom trope than lived reality.

My experiences of Grindr have evidently been informed by my own social subject positions, most especially those of 'race' and gender presentation. As a White man, I am part of the numerically and culturally dominant 'racial' group on Grindr in London. As the 'racial' 'default', White men may typically encounter fewer racialised barriers to hooking-up (although as I explore below, a trend that emerges from my profile analysis is one of Black Grindr users explicitly stating they are not interested in White men), and as I argue in chapters 1 and 2, sexuality is racialised and claimed as the tacit property of Whites– albeit this is mediated in my case by the inherent abjection of homosexuality. My gender presentation is one that oscillates between more and less 'masculine' and 'feminine' positions. When negotiating gay male spaces, I have certainly felt the regulatory glare of so-called 'masc-for-masc' culture- an homogenising formation of gender and sexuality which rewards traditional, totemic performances of manliness with sexual and other spoils⁵². As the years have passed, I have become less interested in Grindr as a place to meet other MSM, preferring other apps and channels with a more explicitly queer sensibility (that is to say, at the very least, more pluralistic and less *clone*-centric). While Grindr is still by far the biggest app of its kind, with over 27 million users globally as of 2017, it now exists in a far more competitive app eco-system, and I believe it has ceded significant ground to rivals as the market for 'sex delivery systems' becomes increasingly fragmented.

Field site 2 – The racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' in biographical contexts: case studies of White and Black MSM

The second field site at which I apply the RoDaS theoretical framework is the research interviews. Here I deploy the framework as a theoretical foundation for a psychosocial approach that attends to participants' self- (and sexuality) construction through discourses, as mediated by the psyche, and in the context of their wider biography. In trying to capture these different registers, my

⁵² To shift the critical spotlight away from 'masc-for-masc' gay men themselves (where it is often targeted – almost always by other gay/queer men); in line with my arguments in the End Notes of this project concerning the limitations of the category 'gay', I largely consider 'masc-for-masc' culture a product of the enduring regulatory violence of the gay/straight binary.

approach paired open-ended and reactive biographical interviews with an analytic frame that blended psychoanalytic concepts with discourse analysis. Below, I begin by outlining the epistemological positions that carry-over from the 'RoDaS' framework to my research methodology. I follow this with a discussion of the ethics considerations I had in mind throughout the planning and execution of this strand of enquiry, including concerns that have been raised by other researchers about the application of psychoanalytic concepts outside of the clinic. I then discuss the development of my biographical interviewing methodology and the iterated analytical approach I applied to the transcripts. I conclude with a discussion of the research participants - including my rationale for selecting four from the total of eight interviews I conducted for presentation within this thesis – and my own stakes and investments in the participants and wider research.

Epistemology

Across the interviews (and this project more broadly), I position the subject as constructed in and through language and discourses. It is language that provides the heuristic frameworks (another way of formulating “discourses”) through which the subject is able to apprehend and construct themselves; and it is through language that all human interaction is mediated. My own approach to language is anchored in British psychology’s so-called “discursive turn”⁵³ (Henriques et al. 1984/1998; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), a disciplinary paradigm-shift through which psychologists came to focus on participant speech as an object of analysis that could generate important insights about human psychology. Potter & Wetherell define discourses - or “interpretative repertoires” - as, “recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena... organised around specific

⁵³ Within the discipline of Psychology in the UK, the “discursive turn” or “discursive psychology” marked an orientation towards critical analytic engagements with language as constitutive of human psychology and behaviour, predicated on the linguistic philosophy of Wittgenstein. Discursive psychology developed branches including that associated with Potter & Wetherell (1987), and Michael Billig (1988), at Loughborough University’s “Discourse Unit”, and the more Foucauldian tradition that came out of the work of scholars like Ian Parker and Erica Burman (1993) at Manchester Metropolitan University.

metaphors and figures of speech (tropes)” (1987: 149). Through tropes, metaphors, and stereotypes – all also modes of *representation* - discourses act as ways of making sense of things; they provide lenses on the world, and explicatory frameworks which inflect human experience. Attending to discourses then, accents the importance of the discursive on our perceptions. In addition to providing subjects with a way to construct and self-situate in the world, discourses are also defined by their availability and/or cultural dominance; even though subjects inflect and re-scramble the meanings of discourses, the starting point is still whatever range of discourses a given subject is exposed to. This is why, for example, the discourses that circulate around the racialisation of sexuality – which provide subjects with both a heuristic frame and a basis for action in the world – matter so much. Arguments that frame sexuality in terms of socio-cultural discourses are also compelling given the prevalence of historically-anchored patterns of erotic desire, such as the enduring appeal and value afforded to Whiteness, or those desires for and aversions to people of colour generated out of stereotypes about Black ‘hyper-’ and Asian ‘a-’ sexuality- to take but two prominent examples that recur in the literature on ‘racial preference’.

Nonetheless, reflecting my racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’ framework, which privileges both history and *particularity*, I also want to locate *the subject-in-discourse*. Rather than positioning subjects as uniform vassals for socio-cultural discourses, I believe we need to formulate what each and every subject brings to them. This has at least two dimensions, which I attempt to reflect in my methodological approach in chapter 5. The first is that the subject’s engagement with - and experience of - discourses is not uniform, but rather mediated dynamically through psychic processes of identification, projection, and splitting (I delineate these in more detail below), which inflect their meaning and significance for the subject (and based on my formulation of an indissolubly psychosocial subject, I position these psychic processes as always-also psychosocial). The second dimension mediating the subject’s relationship to discourse is that every subject is also the product of a biography, an accumulation of life experiences, which provides an additional context – and

mediating register – through which discourses acquire meaning and significance for individual subjects. This biography is not exhausted by a delineation of the subject's 'subject positions' but reflects the way that the subject's lived experience is *particular* and always exceeds these.

Complimenting the approach of the RoDaS framework's emphasis on the psychic and the social, the general and the particular, are the works of three authors I cite here in order to borrow from the richness of their formulations, which strike me as especially apposite when seeking to apply RoDaS to the analysis of qualitative interview texts. Firstly, Oliver's (2004) distinction between subject positions and subjectivity resonates again. The flat reading of a discourse and the subject's relation to it might construe both in terms of 'subject positions', while an emphasis on the constitution of subjectivity in and through discourses emphasises the subject's capacity for "response-ability" and agency in their relation to the social. Secondly, I found a formulation of the 'subject-in-discourse' made by Darieck Scott extremely useful. In parsing "discourses", Scott distinguishes two objects: "the discourse-as-the-text" and the "discourse-as-the-imagined- 'I'" (2010: 222). The former is a kind of *discourse-out-there*, the social life of the discourse and *something-like* its inherent qualities and meanings; the "discourse-as-the-imagined- 'I'" however is the discourse as it becomes inhabited *dynamically* by the subject, acquiring new resonances in the process. Finally, and echoing this approach, I found another useful anchor in the pioneering work of sociologist and psychoanalyst Iain Craib (1989). Craib argues that while we might be able to explain a lot about a given subject's life by "the cards" they are dealt (that is, the structural, sociological, flatly-discursive reading of their life), much else ultimately depends on how that hand is played; a matter, it seems to me, of the dynamic interplay of these 'cards dealt' with the subject's dynamic psyche and biography (the seat of what I call tentatively, "*something like* agency"). Craib suggests that by ignoring the subject's inner life, we risk restricting human possibilities and marginalising what is most creative and wonderful about our abilities to survive against the odds. Not least, the unconscious as a site of psychic dynamism and conflict suggests the inevitability of the subject exceeding their 'cards dealt'. Building on these inherently

psychosocial formulations, I suggest that discourses constitute points of identification (and disidentification) for the subject, mediated by other psychodynamic processes such as splitting and projection (defined in more detail below). As points of identification, mediated by these other psychic processes, discourses become invested with psychic energy (in psychoanalytic terminology, they become “object cathexes”⁵⁴), and acquire meaning for the subject. To reiterate, this meaning is *delimited, but not exhausted*, by any intrinsic or ‘objective’ qualities of the discourse, and part of the reason I analysed and present the interviews discretely and holistically as case studies is in order to be able to read the participant’s relationship to one discourse in the context of the totality of discourses they marshal to construct their life narrative (more specifically their life narrative *in terms of* their sexuality, which is broadly the question with which I opened each interview). Nonetheless, when I deploy the terminology “psychic” I do so on the basis that it is always-already mediated by the social. So, for instance, psychic processes of splitting and projection can be configured as *by definition* psychosocial, recalling again the ways the paranoid-schizoid organisation of the racist mind and the racist society mirror and reinforce each other.

Ethics

In line with Departmental policy, before on embarking on my work with live participants, I completed the Birkbeck SSHP (School of Social Science, History & Philosophy) ‘Proposal to Conduct Research for Ethical Approval’ form, which was reviewed and signed-off by the school ethics committee on 17th May 2017. The key issues raised by this process concerned (i) minimising potential for participants to experience distress; (ii) ensuring adequate confidentiality protocols were in place, including thoroughly anonymising all transcripts; and (iii) achieving good information governance.

⁵⁴ Laplanche & Pontalis label cathexis as one of psychoanalysis’ “economic” concepts i.e. concerned with quantities and ratios, and define it as, “the fact that a certain amount of psychical energy is attached to an idea or to a group of ideas, to a part of the body, to an object etc. (1973/2006: 62).

In my Ethics proposal, I acknowledged that both the subject matter and the interview format had the potential to cause participants distress. The topic of sexuality is an especially intimate one, and for queer subjects, it may also be injurious. This injuriousness is redoubled when 'race' is put into the mix, especially for queers of colour, and I acknowledged throughout, my potential to cause more and less intentional injury through my presentation as a White researcher. I sought to mediate this in the first place by ensuring that participants were as-informed as possible about the scope and intent of the research, which was outlined in detail via the recruitment email and information sheet and consent form that all participants signed (these are included as Appendix C). I sent the latter documents in advance of the interviews and then presented participants with them again on the day. I also verbally reiterated that participants were free to withdraw from the research at any time, including after the interview had been conducted. Throughout the interviews I attempted to remain hyper-sensitive to the potential for distress, but in the event, I felt this wasn't an issue. As a follow-up, participants were provided with crisis helpline numbers including 'The Samaritans' and the London LGBT+ service 'Switchboard'. I also provided contact details for both of PhD supervisors in the Psychosocial Studies department at Birkbeck, University of London, should participants have any concerns about me or how the interviews were conducted.

All participants were assured of the anonymity of the process of participating in the research, and I believe I maintained exemplary standards in this regard throughout. I have extensive experience of delivering confidential work within the charity and sexual health sectors, and I approached the interviews in the same way as this sort of client work, not divulging to anyone who I had interviewed, when, or where. Given the length and richness of detail in the interview narratives, the process of anonymising the transcripts was complex, but all the more crucial. While ages, ethnicities, sexuality, and education data are included in their unadulterated form, all other participant details including names (self and others), places, companies and so on have been changed in order to anonymise the transcripts and write-up. In order to remain faithful to the originals, I have chosen descriptors that highlight the essential characteristics of

the thing replaced e.g. for a given London suburb defined by its 'multiracial' character, I highlight this characteristic.

To record the interviews, I used both an electronic Dictaphone and the Voice Memo app on my iPhone (in case one of the two malfunctioned during the recording). These were transferred onto my laptop during the process of transcription, which was easier to type-up with the sound file on the computer (as I was able to use the stop/start button on my keyboard to pause the sound file as I typed, rather than having to continually engage with a second object – my phone or Dictaphone). The sound files were subsequently transferred onto a password-protected file on my external hard drive and deleted from my phone and the Dictaphone. In line with guidelines from the British Psychological Society and British Sociological Association, I have proposed to keep data for a three-year period, in order to allow adequate time for my data and/or interpretations to be challenged by readers/reviewers. I didn't store any contact details for participants, but I do have a history of email contacts with them, in my Birkbeck student email account, which is provided by Google (Gmail) and fully encrypted.

A note on the ethics of psychoanalytically-informed methods

A final 'ethical' concern I considered extensively before conducting my research related to debates about the use of psychoanalytically informed methods, which take psychoanalysis from the clinic and out into the world. Over the last two decades, psychoanalytically-inflected analyses of qualitative research interviews have been published on topics including fear of crime (Hollway & Jefferson, 2001; 2000/2013), personal life and intimate relationships (Roseneil, 2006), public responses to humanitarian appeals (Seu & Orgad, 2017), and perhaps most pertinent to this study, Black women's subjectivities (Mama, 1995) and racialised masculinities (Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2000 & 2003). Ratele and Shafer (2013) have also demonstrated the fruitfulness of applying a psychoanalytic lens to archival testimonies, in this case from Apartheid-era South Africa. I immersed myself in this work when formulating my own

approach to applying a psychoanalytic methodology. Reading these studies was encouraging and, I say somewhat cautiously, emboldening, as before I had seen psychoanalytic methodologies applied, I was already aware that the ethics of these approaches had – rightly – been the subject of much scrutiny. One of the most prominent criticisms of using psychoanalytic approaches outside of the clinic is that it leads to interpretations of participant narratives that are anti-democratic and disempower participants by purporting to know them better than they know themselves (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). This recalls Haraway's critique of the so-called "God's eye view" (1988), in which the researcher adopts an omnipotent position in relation to their research subjects. I attempt to mediate this in a number of ways. Firstly, recalling my formulation of the interview as a 'staged snapshot of subjectivity', my interpretations are restricted to the *subject-in-discourse*, constructed as a product of the intersubjective research encounter, at a particular time and place. Interviewees responded to a solicitation to participate in research that was seeking to better understand the lived experience of 'racial preference' in sex and dating, and my analytic treatment of their accounts is an attempt to leverage them to this end; it is emphatically not meant as a diagnosis or a snapshot of participants' psyches. Furthermore, I formulate the knowledge I am producing as *situated*, specific to the context in which it is *co-produced*, to the particularities of a relational encounter between myself and the participants, and to a range of other contingencies, such as the sexual, 'racial', gender, class and other identities and performances that we carried with us into the interviewing room. Throughout this strand of enquiry, I have attempted to keep in mind the approach Haraway calls "feminist objectivity", which in contrast to more traditional scientific objectivity, "is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object" (Haraway 1988: 583).

I also highlight the fact that in applying psychoanalytic frames, I position psychoanalysis as a speculative body of theory, which is at its best when it situates itself on the terrain of ambivalence and uncertainty. As Frosh puts it, "There are many claimed certainties in psychoanalysis but none of them are certain – how can they be, when the procedure of psychoanalysis reveals so

clearly that everything, even its own claims and rational formulations, are imbued with the seductions and irrationality of emotive, flamboyant, unconscious impulses” (1997: 232). In this spirit, I am not engaging psychoanalysis as a foundation from which to build claims about universal truths, but rather as a rich framework that can be used to map the imbrications of (racialised) sexuality and identity, specifically as these can be gleaned from the co-constructed narratives of sexuality and wider subjectivity generated within the interview encounters.

Iterating my approach: a psychosocial methodology for conducting and analysing research interviews

Reflecting my ‘RoDaS’ framework, in the interviews I seek to track evidence of racialised ‘desire as sexuality’ on a number of registers: as it becomes manifest as a particular, biographical phenomenon (representing the subject’s re-rendering of early desires as sexuality during puberty and then throughout the lifecourse); as it draws on historically anchored discourses to produce the ‘stuff’ of sexuality, drawing for example on colonial representations of the ‘racial’ Other; and as it presents as foundational ‘narrative of self’, that strives – and always, inevitably fails – toward fixity and coherence. Thinking more practicably about how to attend to these registers of my framework, I constructed a psychosocial methodology for conducting and analysing research interviews which privileges three things: (1) the importance of discourses as the means by which the subject becomes constructed in and through language (this can be taken as reflecting the point at which sexuality and identity become saturated with history and its legacies as they are constructed in and through discourse); (2) an attendance to the psychic mediation of discourses via psychodynamic processes, privileging especially identification and disidentification, but also splitting, and projection. I also tracked for evidence of unconscious conflict as manifest within the interviews, such as narrative contradiction and parapraxis (this relates to the RoDaS framework’s emphasis on particularity and subjective mediation); (3) the subject’s lived experience as conjured in and through a biographical life-narrative (a further register on which the particularity of

sexuality as a racial formation unfolds). Essentially then, point (1) addresses discourses at the social-discursive level, while points (2) and (3) attempt to locate the particularity of the *subject-in-discourse*.

Some psychoanalytic concepts in the field

While I have formulated identification in the preceding chapters, below I provide formulations of the psychic processes I seek to track across the interviews, as these are applied *specifically* within the methodology.

Identification: I take the psychic process of identification to be foundational to the constitution of the psychosocial subject. Identification can also be thought of as always-already psychosocial; since identification rests on internalisation – whether by incorporation or introjection (I explore the difference between these two forms of internalisation, and their consequences for the racialisation of desire as sexuality in the following chapter) – it is also the means through which the social becomes inscribed on the psychic. Once inscribed, identifications work to recreate – and sometimes even recalibrate – the social, as they generate performances of social categories such as ‘race’, gender and class. As a taking-in of the social, identification also forms a psychosocial dialectic with processes of projection and projective identification, by which internalised contents of the psyche are put back out into the world (onto and into other subjects) where they then influence and shape it. Identifications become psychically invested and draw-in psychic energy, creating an attendant affective charge and resonance for the subject. Where identifications are empathic, they may facilitate the subject seeing through the eyes of the other (to greater and lesser degrees)- a process I posit as psychically foundational to the process of racial literacy (Winddance Twine, 2010). In the process of empathic identification, the subject may come to feel invested in the other and their way of seeing the world. This formulation of “empathic identification” raises the wider issue of the mediating qualities of identification. One way of reading Muñoz’ *Disidentifications* (1999), explored in the previous chapter, is as a series of formulations of *mediated* identification, thinking about the possibilities of what identification can be, from the

positionality of queers of colour and their relationships to dominant or potentially problematic objects of identification.

Since I am not claiming to have access to participants' inner lives, for the purposes of my analyses of the research interviews, I am tracking evidence of identifications through the transcripts. I take as evidence participants' accounts of themselves and their lives, their discussions of interpersonal relationships, and the way participants position themselves in relation to particular discourses and any subject positions to which these give rise. Because I treat the transcripts as 'cases', I am also able to map identifications in the context of participants' broader life narratives, and I think this contextualisation greatly enhances the scope for nuanced interpretations. Conversely, I would proceed with caution before attempting to apply the analytic methodology I am iterating here *across* a dataset, where individual participant narratives are subsumed to the search for 'themes'. Like the readings of processes of 'projection' and 'splitting' below, my application of all these psychoanalytic concepts 'in the field' is speculative, and I formulate them as inherently psychosocial - rather than reductively psychic.

Within the case studies, I also attempt to qualify identifications in a limited way in terms of manifest or pertinent qualities for the purposes of my reading and interpretation of the data e.g. labelling identifications as "positively" or "negatively" inflected or accented. While this may seem limited or crude (given the plethora of conflicting affective accents that might colour any one identification), it emanates from a position of wanting to limn a *particular inflection*, which may be doing particular work, or having specific effects, without presuming to know all of the different inflections at work. One crucial thing to bear in mind is that *every* identification – however negative – is an investment and an object cathexis for the subject in question, and as such is a potential resource for the construction of their sexuality and identity. Thus to say that a particular identification is negatively inflected is *not* to say that it does not remain vital to the subject's sense of self.

Splitting and projection: My definitions of the processes of splitting and projection come from the Kleinian model of the psyche. Klein (1927, 1946, 1957; Bott Spillius, 2011) argued that from the first, humans are torn between love and hate, envy and gratitude, and that as we try to integrate these feelings we oscillate between paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. In the former, we split love and hate, idealising and denigrating objects (and the self) so that they can only be totally good or totally bad. The splitting associated with the paranoid-schizoid position momentarily assuages anxiety, preserving entirely good objects, although this comes at the cost of designating other objects as entirely bad, from which persecutory fantasies are very likely to follow. It is also important to note – remembering the importance of objects to the constitution of the subject's own ego – that split objects generate split egos. Splitting remains a primary psychic defence throughout the life course, and – as discussed earlier – some theorists such as Michael Rustin (1991) have taken it up at the level of the psychosocial, arguing that as a psychic structure it frames the organisation of the racist mind into (good) us and (bad) them. Thinking specifically about the organisation of sexuality – which so often seems to be organised according to *poles* of attraction and disgust, and which is socially organised around discrete positions and objects of desire (the homo/hetero binary being the most prominent example) – a 'split' or 'paranoid-schizoid' organisation strikes me as a compelling descriptor. Thinking more psychosocially, discourses themselves might also facilitate splitting, organising the world according into the paranoid-schizoid logic of all-good and all-bad, which provides simplicity and certitude, and may temporarily assuage anxiety, even while generating significant costs over the longer-term.

According to Klein, another primary defence against anxiety – one which often accompanies splitting – is 'projection' (1946), a process in which we project difficult, painful or otherwise unwanted feelings onto others. Projection psychically defenestrates difficult and unwanted contents while reassuring the subject that they are on the side of all that is good and right. Like splitting, projection has also been formulated as a structuring factor in societal racism; Kovel (1970/1988) sees anti-Black racism in the United States as predicated on a

repository of disavowed thoughts, feelings and behaviours (dirtiness, laziness, sexual impropriety) *projected* onto Black Americans, under the rubric of a White puritanical capitalism.

Evidence of the unconscious: I use psychoanalytic theory on one final register in my analysis of the interviews, examining the interview text for traces of unconscious conflict, manifested as anxiety, which I read for in two ways: narrative contradiction, and parapraxis (Freudian slips). While attending to the co-presence of conflicting positions in participant testimonies is a common feature of qualitative research in the social sciences, I frame it here after an approach formulated by Hook, who argues that such conflict reflects, “closely the compromise of a *defence*” (2005: 14). I thus interpret narrative conflict as a trace or residue of the unconscious (which would more commonly be rendered as “cognitive dissonance”), belying an attempt to assuage anxiety, and allowing the subject to defensively sustain logically incommensurable positions. This also recalls Freud’s ‘kettle argument’, which goes something like: “you never loaned me that kettle; moreover it was broken, and anyway, I already returned it to you” (quoted in Laplanche, 1970/1985: 29). In Freud’s example the subject is motivated by a particular desire - to avoid returning the kettle - just like we might say the subject seeks to avoid engaging with difficult or challenging thoughts. Therefore, I read some of the points of contradiction in participant testimonies as unconscious avoidance and attempts to defend against the anxiety that might ensue once avoidance is no longer an option. Finally, I read transcripts for notable “parapraxes”, which are occasions where the subject’s conscious goal has been replaced by another one, which is assigned to the unconscious. This is the logic by which the so-called “Freudian slip” is read as being *unconsciously intentional*. The idea here is not to suggest that the accident of speech was definitely intentional, but to *trouble* the idea that it is merely incidental and therefore unworthy of interpretation by the researcher.

Biographical Narrative Interviews

The interview procedure I followed was heavily influenced by the “Biographical Narrative Interview Method” (Wengraf, 2001, 2016). In prompting participants to generate a rich life narrative (if all goes to plan), BNIM facilitates the production of interview transcripts that can be analysed at the level of the social – discourses – and the particular – participant biography’s. In this way, I believe the methodology reflects my RoDaS framework’s emphasis on historical inheritance and subjective mediation.

Unlike more typical semi-structured interview methodologies used throughout the social sciences, the BNIM interview does not start with a detailed set of questions in mind, but rather responds reactively – albeit with reference to a well-considered structure – to participants as they present in the interview. The BNIM interview is structured around an initial open-ended biographical question, the so-called, “Single Question Designed to Induce a Narrative” (SQUIN), which is intended to prompt the participant to tell their life story, in as much length and detail as they choose, and without interruption. On the basis of the response to the SQUIN, the researcher then generates and poses questions called, “Particular Incident Narratives” (PINs). PINs are attempts to prompt the participant to elaborate on some of the generalities coming out of their response to the SQUIN and are essential to producing the kind of rich data that BNIM aims for. So, for instance, if in their SQUIN response the participant said, “In that period I was often happy”, then a follow-up PIN might ask, “Can you tell me about a time from that period when you were happy?”. In the course of conducting the interviews, I also felt the need to move beyond the strict SQUIN-PIN structure of BNIM, by asking questions that did not fit the precise formulation demanded by “Particular Incident Narratives” (essentially always a variation on “Can you describe a time when...”), since I found this too restrictive. While my questions were never pre-planned and always reactive, in-the-moment, responses to participant narratives, the fact that I moved beyond the BNIM structure in this way means the interviews are probably best described as “BNIM-influenced” or “-inflected”, or perhaps simply as “biographical interviews”.

Ultimately, I believe the richness of the narratives I elicited from participants was due in no small part to the open structure of my biographical interviewing methodology. Each interview responded specifically to the participant, rather than assuming a prior agenda, and as such the methodology could be viewed as empowering interviewees and allowing them to tell their stories on their own terms, certainly compared with more dominant methodologies in the social sciences. This insight is checked somewhat by the performance anxiety I believe the methodology can generate (for both researcher and researched alike) – at times it may be too non-directive and participants who are less confident, more diffident, or simply lack experience of talking about themselves at length, may struggle more. Without a pre-defined script, the stakes feel higher in that neither researcher nor participant knows what is going to come out of the interview, or what the interview will touch upon. To say that the open-structure of the interviews potentially empowers participants is also not to suggest that I wasn't involved in making judgements which drove interviews in particular directions; for example, it is up to the researcher to decide on the generation and deployment of PIN questions, something that clearly shapes the narratives produced through the interviews.

The first interview was conducted with a White participant – Giacomo - using a SQUIN which sought to induce a biographical narrative framed in terms of the significance of 'race' to desire. Since 'desire' is quite an amorphous and academic concept⁵⁵ I formulated the following SQUIN:

“As you know I am researching how so-called 'racial preferences' play out across Grindr. In order to do that I'm interested in your wider experience of race as it relates to your sexual and romantic life, including your experiences before Grindr came into being, and both your on- and off-line experiences to date. To that end, *can you please tell me the story of your*

⁵⁵ For instance, while I describe my own research in terms of the racialisation of 'desire as sexuality', this terminology is not reflected in participant accounts or wider debates, which invariably invoke 'racial preference'

life in terms of ‘race’ as it has been a factor in your sexual and romantic history, both in terms of your own partner selections and preferences, and how others relate to you? Take your time and feel free to discuss any experience that seems relevant, even peripherally. I won’t interrupt. Once you feel you’ve said all you want to, I will take some time to review my notes and generate some follow-up questions⁵⁶.”

As well as being a long and rather cumbersome formulation, the scope of this question is narrow for a SQUIN, reflecting my own anxieties about using an unstructured interview methodology and whether a more open formulation would have thrown the interview ‘off course’; that is, avoided or evaded the specific topics around racialised sexuality and identity that I wanted to engage. In the event, the interview with Giacomo produced a very short initial response, coming in at under two minutes in length. I speculated that this might be due to a couple of factors: the way in which I had sought to frame ‘race’ specifically in terms of sexual and romantic preferences, which required a lot of the respondent, especially given the societal lack of a ready vocabulary suitable for parsing these topics together; also pertinent was what I interpreted as the inability of the participant, a White man, to think about himself in racialised terms, which meant he excluded himself from the frame. Giacomo’s initial response to the SQUIN thus ended up being less a life narrative than a list of his romantic partners. It was as though the inclusion of a ‘racial’ lens made it impossible for him to provide his own life narrative. While this is an interesting observation on Whiteness, I didn’t want this to repeat itself across all the interviews with White participants. Given I was already unsure and anxious about the question formulation, after reflecting with my supervisors, I reformulated and broadened the scope of the SQUIN as follows:

“As you know I am researching how so-called ‘racial preferences’ play out across Grindr. In order to do that I’m interested in your wider experience

⁵⁶ Re-reading and reflecting on this question formulation several years later, I think I would probably now approach this as: (i) Can you please tell me the story of your life in terms of your sexuality?’; or (ii) Can you please tell me the story of your sex and dating life?

of race as it relates to your sexual and romantic life, including your experiences before Grindr came into being, and both your on- and off-line experiences to date. To that end, *can you please tell me the story of your life in terms of your sexual and romantic preferences*⁵⁷? Take your time and feel free to discuss any experience that seems relevant, even peripherally. I won't interrupt. Once you feel you've said all you want to, I will take some time to review my notes and generate some follow-up questions."

Notably then, 'race' 'dropped out' from this SQUIN formulation, although it was always on the agenda due to its prominence in my introductory comments, research literature (consent form, participant information sheet), and in the Grindr profile I had used to recruit participants. I believe this shift away from 'race' had the effect of encouraging participants to discuss the history of their sexualities, desires, and romantic lives within, alongside, and outside of the explicit 'racial' frame of my research. Thus, one effect of this new formulation may have been to provide greater scope to discuss 'race' alongside other primary dimensions of sexuality, such as gender. It also potentially freed them somewhat from the potential anxiety of talking about 'race' or talking about it "in the wrong way"; the latter perhaps an especially important consideration with respect to White participants.

Analysing the transcripts

BNIM has its own very extensive and prescriptive analytic procedure, but researchers are also encouraged to use the BNIM interview structure in combination with other analytic approaches (Wengraf, 2016). As delineated above, I chose to iterate my own analytic framework intended to engage the *subject in discourse*, which reflects the RoDaS framework's emphasis on sexuality

⁵⁷ As for the recruitment ad, I framed sexuality here in terms of "preference" (deploying it twice within this formulation). My reasoning was again that I was reflecting the dominant terminology for sexuality outside of academia, which I would argue is "sexual preference" and/or "sexual orientation". However, in retrospect I would have substituted "sexual and romantic preferences" here for "sexuality", as I feel I risked invoking the preference discourse and potentially influencing participant responses as a result.

as a site of social regulation and historical inheritance, always-already mediated by the subject's dynamic psyche and the particularity of their biography. I seek to achieve this practically through an emphasis on three primary considerations: (1) mapping discourses; (2) tracking the participants' identifications and disidentifications through these discourses, alongside evidence of other psychic (and psychosocial) processes that mediate discourses; and (3), locating both discourses and psychic processes within the particularity of a wider life narrative/biography. In working with the interviews, I executed the following steps:

1) Transcription: I transcribed all interviews myself, in detail, aiming for what Braun & Clarke call an "orthographic" transcript of the recordings. This captures language verbatim, as well as significant non-linguistic attributes of the recordings, such as pauses, vocal tics, and equivocation noises ("errr", "ummm" etc.), and striking changes of pitch, tone, and pace of speech. These are all captured in the transcripts and reproduced in the gobbets of participant speech around which I have constructed the case studies. The transcription process helped me relive the interview experience, while also highlighting the extent of what I had forgotten or missed in the course of conducting the interviews. After Braun & Clarke (2006) I frame this early stage of the process of analysis as itself an "interpretative act".

2) Immersion: The next part of the process was immersion in the data. This technically began with my transcription of the interviews, after which I read and re-read each participant's transcript alongside my research diary entries (the latter are discussed in more detail below). On my second reading of the transcripts, I jotted down and mapped life events chronologically, producing an overarching life narrative for each participant, which provided the biographical context in which to situate the discourses and evidence of psychic processes. I then began the process of coding.

3) Labelling, sorting, and analysing the data: Working carefully through each transcript, I analysed them on their own terms, and without

reference to other participant narratives (although I have drawn some lines of [dis-] continuity at the writing-up stage). I analysed through two lenses: the first was identifying and labelling transcripts in terms of the discourses (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) on which participants drew to frame their life narratives and sexualities. The second was in terms of the psychic processes that I speculated mediated the participants' relationships to these discourses. Here I privileged identifications (and disidentifications) and their accents, while also looking for evidence of projection and splitting, and unconscious processes such as psychic conflict (contradiction in the narratives) and parapraxis. For example, if a given discourse positioned the participant or a particular group (social demographic, family etc.) in a particular way, I speculated about what kind of identification (or disidentification) might predicate such a discursive position. I have included an example page of coded text from Anthony's (case study 2) transcript in appendix B. Once the transcripts were analysed in this way, for each participant I wrote up a narrative synopsis and listed the prominent discourses and the attendant identifications these potentially implied. These synopses facilitated me writing up the interviews as cases with a structured 'narrative'. I include the example of Anthony's narrative synopsis and discourses and identifications as an example, also in appendix B.

4) Writing up the case studies: Reflecting my aim of contextualising discourses and identifications within the particularity of participant biographies, I wrote up the interviews as case studies. I note that my use of 'case studies' here reflects the psychoanalytic tradition of 'cases', which focus on one subject/participant, and is at odds with the more common use of the term within qualitative research (which typically means a thematic 'case' rather than a focus on individual subjects). I believe treating the data in terms of cases holds onto the integrity of individual participants, evoking a rich picture of their subjectivities, their nuances and complexities, as well as attesting to the particularity of the racialisation of 'desire as sexuality' as a site of individual meaning making and conflict resolution (or anxiety assuagement). Through the process of

writing-up, I continued to spot new things in the data, testifying (I think) to both the richness of the data and the fecundity of a hybridly psychoanalytical-discursive lens, and thus the process of writing-up constituted what Braun & Clarke (2006) refer to as a “recursive” process, a movement back and forth between producing the narrative cases and analysing the data.

Participants

I set out to interview 5 White MSM who identified as having a racial preference and 5 MSM of colour. As I was interested in capturing diverse experiences regarding ‘race’ and so-called ‘racial preferences’, I did not have an age limit in mind, although all participants, by virtue of being Grindr users, would have to be 18 years and over. There were no further recruitment criteria. My reasoning for the additional recruitment criterion in the case of White MSM (their identifying as having a ‘racial preference’) is predicated on a hypothesis that White men who self-identified as having a racialised sexuality would be more able to think and talk about ‘race’ than, say, a White man who is attracted to other White men. While White MSM’s identities and sexualities are subject to racialising practices, it is part of the implicit character of Whiteness that such racialisation is often slippery and unconscious, and thus I questioned whether White men without a self-identified ‘racial preference’ would be able to say anything substantive at all about ‘race’. Conversely it was my implicit hypothesis that MSM of colour would have been subject to, and more likely to be conscious of, racialising practices, whether or not they thought of their own desires in racialised terms.

In addition to sending out a recruitment email to my wider professional and academic network, participants were chiefly recruited through a dedicated Grindr profile, which included a generic image of a rainbow flag, and the following text-descriptor: “University of London research project exploring the phenomenon of ‘racial preferences’. Looking to interview MSM of colour, and White MSM who identify as having a ‘racial preference’. Confidential, anonymised process. Enquire for more info”. The profile title (restricted by a

very limited character count) was “‘Racial pref?’. I deliberated about using the terminology ‘racial preference’, since it is so problematic; however, I decided to use it at the time on account of it being the dominant terminology used outside of academia- something I felt would make recruitment more straightforward and reflect the dominant meaning-making frame around the racialisation of sexuality. I now regret this choice of language, since even if I was trying to reflect dominant terminology, as a researcher, I also risked legitimising it. In future, even though I think terminologies like “racialisation of desire” and “racialisation of sexuality” (even before we get onto “the racialisation of desire *as* sexuality”!) are more abstract, academic, and cumbersome, I would privilege them over running the risk of further legitimating the ‘preference’ discourse.

The Grindr profile went live for 7 months from December 2017 to June 2018, and I recruited 8 participants in total, 4 MSM of colour and 4 White MSM. Due to the richness of the interview data and the fact I would be writing-up the interviews as individual case studies - rather than aggregating patterns across the transcripts - I stopped recruiting and interviewing before I had reached my initial goal of 10 participants. Two of the final eight participants (and 2 of the 4 case studies) came from my extended network. In both cases, I have noted this prior relationship in the case study write-up. A table of participants’ demographic data is included below:

Participant Pseudonym	Case Study #	Age	Ethnicity (as self-described)	Sexuality (as self-described)	Education
Giacomo	1	37	White European	Gay	Post-High School Diploma
Anthony	2	24	White British	Bisexual	University Graduate
Josh	3	24	Black African	Bisexual	University Graduate
Trevor	4	29	Black African-	Gay	University

			Caribbean		Postgraduate
Marcus	n/a	23	Black African-Caribbean	Bisexual	Undergraduate
Nasir	n/a	35	South Asian	Gay	University Graduate
David	n/a	28	White British	Gay	University Postgraduate
Charles	n/a	54	White British	Gay	High School Diploma

The aim of this strand of enquiry was never to recruit a ‘typical’ or ‘representative’ sample. Nonetheless, I include this brief discussion and the table above in order to contextualise the participant group taken as a whole, while commenting on a couple of broad demographic patterns. The spread of participant ages was broad, the youngest being 23 and the oldest 54- although seven of the eight participants were in their twenties or thirties. This group would qualify as ‘millennials’, a demographic moniker that is commonly defined as people born in or after 1980, and which captures a generation who grew up surrounded by rapidly evolving network and computational technologies. While people of all ages certainly do use hook-up and dating apps, I speculate that the prominence of ‘millennials’ in the sample could reflect a bias on Grindr toward the young. I also wondered whether it might reflect a greater interest in the research topic among this age demographic. I deliberately set out to recruit an equal sample of White men and MSM of colour. Of the MSM of colour, the sample was skewed toward Black men, with three of the four participants being of African or African Caribbean backgrounds. This has further contributed to the *particularisation* of this project in the course of conducting it: where I set out to explore the racialisation of sexuality more widely, it has increasingly come to rest on particular formations of White-Black ‘transracial’ intimacies; something that also reflects my academic reading and my personal experience of romance/sexuality in the last few years especially. Nonetheless, the ‘ethnic’ profiles of participants in this sample were a reflection of the responses I received to my Grindr recruitment profile, rather than a function of my

deliberately having set out to recruit only White and Black men. As the table indicates, the majority of participants were also university-educated. Education was something I chose to record as an - admittedly imperfect - reflection of participant class positions. Although the so-called 'democratisation' of higher education has somewhat diluted the correlation between class and education, I believe it still stands as a marker of class in terms of cultural capital, which is also relevant to the discourses and vocabularies that participants draw on to frame their biographic narratives. The majority of participants also held professional jobs; while I initially recorded details of participants' professions, I have chosen to omit these here as potentially identifying data - in the case studies I have changed all professional details to similar or equivalent jobs and industries. The educational profile of the participants also highlights another prominent pattern in empirical social science studies, which is that those who self-select to participate in research often tend to be well-educated. I suggest this is a limitation both of the current study and of present social science paradigms, and that without significant efforts to recruit more widely, we are unlikely to hear the stories of other educational demographics (Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010).

In Chapter 5, I include four case studies, of a total of eight participants. I limited myself to four due to time and resource constraints, and knowing that I would never be able to include all eight cases in my final thesis write-up (although I intend to revisit the remaining four as part of future projects). In the first instance, I chose the four - with some difficulty and deliberation - because among the narratives, theirs struck me as best exemplifying the messiness and ambivalence of the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality'; each one testifies (and makes the case for) my overarching argument about the proximity of 'desire *as* sexuality' and identity, and about the multivalent and mediated nature of the identifications through which these are constructed. Thus, reflecting my theoretically-driven approach, the four cases presented I feel make the best case for and most fruitful use of the RoDaS framework. The four cases chosen also manifest a certain coherence in providing two examples of White men with racialised desires for Black men, and two Black men whose desires are racialised

toward White men. Again, it is also perhaps not incidental that ‘transracial’ intimacies between Black and White men is the dynamic with which I personally am most familiar, both through my own life experiences, and as a product of my wider reading and acculturation.

The dynamics of the racialised sexualities of the four participants whose cases are not written-up can be (crudely) summarised as follows: (i) a Black participant whose sexuality was exclusively oriented to other Black men; (ii) an upper-middle-class White participant whose sexuality was predominantly oriented to Black men; (iii) a wealthy, older White man whose sexuality was predominantly oriented to younger East Asian men; and (iv) a South Asian man whose sexuality was oriented exclusively to White men. In the case of (ii), (iii), and (iv), I felt that elements of the dynamics in-play are covered to greater and lesser degrees by the case studies I have written up: e.g. (ii) has similarities to Anthony’s narrative, and (iv) to Trevor’s. The decision to write-up two case studies of Black men with a sexual orientation to White men and two White men with a sexual orientation to Black men was made partly on the basis of wanting to focus on the plurality within a particular racialised dynamic of sexuality, which meant that some of the diversity of the overall data set was lost as a result.

Reflexivity

As a final comment on my methodology for chapter 5, I reflect on my own investments and role in shaping the production of knowledge, both within the interviews and ‘post-production’ stages of analysis and write-up.

The period in which I was conducting the interviews was one of high excitement and anxiety; the excitement of the empirical researcher out in the field, generating new ‘data’ to work from in the hope it will lead to fresh insights and interesting perspectives; excitement inevitably coupled with anxiety as doubts register (“Will I get the material and insights I need?” “Will I prove a good enough interviewer?” “Am I doing this ‘right?’”). In order to track my responses to the research process, I kept a research diary, which I filled out before and after

each interview, and occasionally in between when I found my mind wandering back to the interviews. I discuss this in more detail in relation to individual participants below, but firstly I would like to reflect more generally on the process of conducting the interviews.

My White 'racial' identity was evidently a factor in the co-production of interviews. Both my own racial identity and that of participants was thrown into sharper relief by the topic under research, which concerns itself explicitly with 'race'. Four of the interviews were conducted with MSM of colour, and 4 with White MSM. The meanings of my Whiteness were not uniform in the case of either group, although patterns can and did emerge. For instance, participants who were people of colour may have questioned the nature of my engagement with 'race', as a high degree of racial consciousness is not usually associated with a White racial identity. Although this was not explicitly articulated to me, they may also have been aware of histories of pathologising research conducted by White scholars in Psychology (Henriques, 1984, pp. 60-90; Mama, 1995, pp. 17-63) and Sociology (Ferguson, 2003 pp. vii - 53; Bhatt, 2016). In the event, in all but one of the interviews with MSM of colour, I believe my Whiteness enabled the sharing of certain aspects of their lives and racialised desires that might have been difficult to share with another person of colour; in these three cases, the participants described a sexual and romantic preference for White partners. Amongst the available discourses and interpretative repertoires that circulate around such a 'preference' are those of self-hate and loathing, submission to white supremacy, and "internalised racism", or being anti- one's own 'race' or ethnicity. While talking to a White researcher doesn't bypass these concerns, I make the supposition that my own 'racial' and ethnic presentation could be read as rendering me less liable to making judgements on these terms. Conversely, in the case of Marcus, a black participant who was exclusively into other Black men, I believe my Whiteness may have initially inhibited the flow of the interview at various points. For each of the participants of colour, the degree to which my Whiteness designated me as an outsider or peer – based on their own identifications and psychic investments - will have dictated much of what could – and could not – be shared.

My position as insider/outsider clearly extends beyond 'race' to incorporate my other identities and 'performances', such as those associated with class, region, gender, and 'sexual orientation'. Markers of all of these are inscribed on the body and in the quotidian performances it enacts to convey a sense of 'identity' as it interacts with other 'inscribed' bodies, in what we might formulate as a sort of intersectional habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; Wacquant, 2016). This habitus is underpinned by investments and identifications, held on both sides of the researcher-participant equation, which often remain hidden, and of which habitus can only ever supply us with more and less manifest traces. For my own part: my class identity fluctuates between working- and middle- class, and is also mediated by my "northern" regional identity; my gender identity is that of man with both same and cross-gender identifications and investments; my sexual orientation I define as "queer", predicated on a chequered history with another discourse, "gay", about which I now feel ambivalent. Also ambivalent is my relationship to my Whiteness, since I am always-already, and always-will-be White – e.g. physiognomically White and as such interpellated as White (in a White supremacist society) and able to move in and out of the privileges of Whiteness - but I now feel yoked to, rather than invested in, this racial identity. I also experience my racial identity differently now than a decade ago, reflecting its mediation through a heightened racial consciousness and cross-'racial' identifications in my intimate relationships and patterns of cultural consumption. This is not to disavow, but to complicate my Whiteness, and in no way influences how participants read my racial identity.

It would be impossible to delineate all the pertinent investments and identifications that have shaped my analysis of the interviews in this chapter, not least because some of them are inevitably unconscious. However, I would like to highlight one key life experience that undoubtedly inflects my readings and the wider scope and motivations of this project. The most significant intimate attachment of my adult life was with a Black man, an experience that both significantly developed my own 'racial consciousness' and sedimented a belief that it is possible to acknowledge and grapple with 'race' while attending to all

the other, more typical, joys and challenges of being intimate with another person. The development of my 'racial consciousness' might be formulated as a lifting of the scales from my White eyes, as I transitioned from a naïve 'colour-blind' position in which I often anxiously avoided 'race', to one in which I was forced to confront the absolute necessity of engagement. It was also through the experience of being in an 'interracial' – or what I might now call, after Tate's work, 'transracial' (2015/2018) - intimate relationship that I could truly appreciate what Holland calls, "the saliency of race as a trope, and the absurdity of race as an ideology" (2012: 95).

When I read France Winddance Twine's work on 'racial literacy' and interracial intimacy (2010) – which I also explored in chapter 1 - this provided me with a theoretical vocabulary to explain what I had until then only apprehended phenomenologically, having remained largely unarticulated. Winddance Twine defines 'racial literacy' in relation to the developing racial consciousness of White parents of black children as they begin to identify and contest everyday racisms. I formulate racial literacy as inevitably predicated on processes of identification and empathy, as well as forms of racial knowledge, such as the historical, or those knowledges experienced as intuitive or 'felt'. It also concerns subjects' positioning within discourses, by virtue of their identity categories – of Whiteness, Blackness and their associated meanings– and a desire to contest reductive readings of the related *subject positions* as equivalent to *subjectivity* (Oliver, 2004). For example, against a dominant discourse of Whiteness as racially illiterate and unreflexive, racial literacy can provide a basis on which to construct a counter-discourse that inflects Whiteness with degrees of racial consciousness. Crucial to note however, is that racial literacy is an ongoing process, only ever achieved to varying degrees; thus it is explicitly not grounds for complacency in the way one engages 'racial difference'. Gail Lewis (2009a) testifies to this latter fact poignantly, recounting the experience of being the Black daughter of a White mother, who moves in and out of her own investments in Whiteness and the security and freedom from racial conflict (and terror) it affords. In a White racist society, Whiteness in particular can be a difficult habit to kick, and if, as psychoanalysis would suggest, all meaningful relationships are

defined by ambivalence, then it seems inevitable that 'race' and racial ways of seeing/being/thinking will always be lurking somewhere not too far from consciousness. This scenario bespeaks a complexity and ambivalence to which I think the case studies amply attest.

Throughout the period I was interviewing participants for this project, I kept a research diary. This allowed me to record my immediate responses to participants in detail, without these subsequently becoming coloured by hindsight and the vagaries of my memory. By recording both my affective responses to participants, as well as reflecting on possible identifications with them, I hope to take seriously the idea of reflexivity in my research, thinking about how I may have impacted both the narratives shared (through choice and phrasing of questions, but also through my own manifest identity positions, habitus, and affect), and the subsequent analytic interpretations. After the example provided by Lewis (2009b) of working with the full - often ambivalent - range of emotions put into play during research encounters, I include a synopsis of my research diary entries for each interview at the beginning of the relevant case study. In so doing, I also attempt to trouble the boundaries of what might be considered relevant or admissible data in academic work. While wanting to avoid solipsism, I believe these reflections are important to re-centre me within the research encounter, capturing more of the interview as a co-constructed, relational event, both in-the-moment, and as the interviews were repeatedly restaged in my mind during the course of the analysis.

Chapter 4 – ‘RoDaS’ on Grindr: a theoretically-driven thematic analysis

The importance of eroticised public meeting places in the formation of gay culture and identity has been well documented by gay historians (e.g. Chauncey, 1994). So-called tea rooms, cottages, saunas, pornographic cinemas, and sex clubs, and more or less overtly sexualised gay pubs/bars/clubs, have all played a prominent role in providing gay men (and MSM) with a sense of visibility, shared sexual appetites, and (more and less fleeting) community. In this context, apps such as Grindr can be configured as a smart-phone-enabled next-iteration in an established ‘cruising’ lineage. Even before the emergence of the smartphone as a ubiquitous technology of everyday life, gay men and MSM had put the Internet to use for sex and dating, with sites like Gaydar, Manhunt and Gay Romeo all highly-profitable antecedents to Grindr (Campbell, 2004; Mowlabocus, 2010) – not to mention the inherently *queer* free-for-all that was Craigslist. In fact, it was gay men and MSM - most notably through Grindr - who pioneered the now wildly popular GPS-based dating model, which has become firmly entrenched in heterosexual culture via apps like *Tinder*.

Having turned ten in 2019, Grindr also now has a decade of its own history to look back on. That’s a decade’s-worth of software updates, hardware iterations, chats, browsing, pic-swapping, amateur porn exchange, hook-ups, dates, friendships, long-term relationships, and (more and less) critical commentary. No small part of the academic and gay male media commentary circulating around Grindr has attended to the racialising processes and the racism that constitute a primary dimension of its user experience (FS Magazine, 2015; McGlotten, 2013; Robinson, 2015; Daroya, 2017). From profile texts and images, to pic swaps and user chats, from emojis and voice notes, to filters and data harvesting, ‘race’ and racialising discourses and practices are everywhere on Grindr. In this chapter, I engage in an extended theorisation of Grindr, reading the app through a racialised lens, as a racialised and racialising “infrastructure of intimacy” (Race, 2015a) and site of gay male/MSM sociality. My aims here are to conjure and convey the textures of Grindr’s ‘racial’ life, while also providing

readers with a context in which to place the theoretically-driven thematic analysis of Grindr profiles that follows.

Figuring Grindr

According to Grindr's own press kit, in 2017, the average number of daily logins by Grindr users was 18, totalling 54 minutes of app use. Every 24 hours an average of 228 million messages and 20 million images were exchanged (Grindr, 2017). Figures like these acquire meaning through magnitude, and say different things to different audiences: to Grindr users, they may represent hope, and the more and less imminent potential (McGlotten & Sender, 2018) of the hundreds, even thousands, of interactions waiting to unfold; to advertisers, they speak of an enormous market to be tapped, another opportunity to mine the famous pink pound; and to social scientists, such figures may establish the validity and importance of Grindr as a site of scholarly engagement and critique.

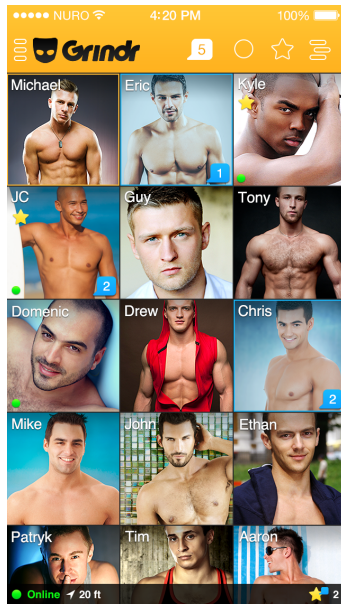
One of the most prominent debates in the academic literature about the app is how to name what Grindr does. In a short space of time it has attracted multiple nomenclatures, with implications for how its functionality is accented and framed. These include: "mobile dating and hook-up app" (Albury et al., 2017); "location-aware gay dating app" (Blackwell et al., 2016); "Gay Male Social Networking Application (GMSNA)" (Tziallas, 2015); "Sex delivery systems" (Race, 2015a); and, "infrastructures of intimacy in gay life" (Race, 2015a). What all of these descriptors have in common is an attempt to grapple with *who* is using Grindr (gay men? The broader moniker MSM? The LGBTQ+ community?); *what* they're using it for (networking, chatting, fucking, dating, LTR-seeking); and *what's* particular about its technical functionality (especially its "location-aware" 'Global Positioning System' [GPS]).

All of these labels are useful up to a point, as they accent Grindr's diverse functionalities and affordances: it does deliver sex (sometimes quite literally, to one's door), but to reduce it entirely to a matter of sex obviates consideration of all the other uses to which it is put, including chat, networking, fantasy, and

image swap. In fact, Tziallas' (2015) formulation of Grindr renders it primarily an erotic fantasy and "porn platform", where sex chat and image-swap are initiated, often without leading to "in real life" (IRL) meets. Designating Grindr as "gay" admittedly captures the prevailing culture and user-base of the app, but potentially elides its importance for the wider MSM public, which may find in Grindr a particularly effective means of locating fellow sexual subjects with complementary desires, while allowing users to remain discreet and/or anonymous. Grindr empowers users to control the flow of information about themselves: they are not obliged to show their face (or bodies) on their profiles; they can use the app pseudonymously; and the release of identifying and personal information comes entirely under individual Grindr users' purview. The response-rate for discreet and anonymous profiles may well in turn reflect this miserly disclosure of personal details, but ultimate control lies with users. Calling Grindr gay also repeats the conflation of erotic desires and sexuality with (racialised) social identities, which I have argued we need to urgently abandon. Of the options to date, formulating Grindr as an "infrastructure of intimacy" for MSM – while a mouthful – might do the best job of capturing the diversity of both user activity and the users themselves.

What's in a Grindr profile? Constructing a racialised self and other

Logging into Grindr, users see profiles arranged in a grid pattern, three across (as shown below), which extends up to 200 profiles; and when users upgrade, the number of profiles they can view increases.



[Source: Grindr Press Pack, 2017. N.b. The profiles shown are of models, and are not real]

Beyond the material considerations of smartphone access and WIFI/data on which to run the app, the fundamental requirement of participation on Grindr is the creation of a profile. While there is no obligation to populate a Grindr profile with any information at all, we can view the online dating profile more broadly as requiring its author to fulfil two key objectives: to describe themselves, and to delineate some criteria for prospective partners/friends/lovers/dog sitters. Users often also state their terms of entry; “down to fuck”: “here for a good time, not a long time”; “seeking LTR”; “couple for third”; “in a relationship, just here for friends”; “new in town”, “networking”. In its call to define self and desired other, the Grindr profile can be formulated as a privileged site at which the imbrications of self-identity-construction with ‘desire *as* sexuality’ are condensed, and as such especially conducive to analysis. Within my own ‘desire *as* sexuality’ formulation, I also suggest that it is a location at which sexuality as a condensed, coherent narrative-of-self is actively encouraged and rewarded, and I keep this in mind throughout my analysis of profiles below.

In the context of the networked media within and through which we now live much of our lives, we are increasingly called upon to give accounts of ourselves (Banet-Weiser, 2012), of which the dating profile can be taken as just one, nestling among the other goal-oriented self-descriptions on Facebook, Twitter

and LinkedIn. Rather than describing an already-established ontology, I would argue that these accounts should be viewed as a reflexive, constructive type of communication that brings the subject *into being*. In other words, when we describe ourselves on our profiles, we are proactively “doing” and performing, rather than merely describing, our subjectivities. In racialised terms, the creation of a Grindr profile might then be thought of, after Lewis (2007), as an “act of becoming”, wherein ‘race’ is never something fixed, self-evident or taken-for-granted, but continually reinscribed through, “our imaginations, identities, and ways and visions of being in the world (...) structured through highly racialised and gendered identifications, discourses and positions” (2007: 875). In turn, Grindr profiles provide other users with “highly racialised and gendered identifications, discourses, and positions”, which is why I suggest it is a site at which ‘race’ is *done* and *made*. In the context of Grindr as an interactive media where responses – solicited or otherwise – are an expectation and structuring aspect of user experience, such racialised and gendered positions are primed for *recognition* and *misrecognition* from the other; processes which validate and momentarily fix them (and the subject performing them) in place. In providing this kind of ready feedback, Grindr limns the fact that our “identifications, discourses and positions” are also inherently relational; as Butler notes in *Undoing Gender* (2004), the subject is always performing gender for an “other”, even if that other is imaginary (in the vernacular sense here, rather than the psychoanalytic), and consequently, *recognition* of this gender performance becomes a site of power (2004: 32). As such, Grindr users are all more or less consciously *vectors* for this validating power of (mis-)recognition, while always and at the same time being *subject* to it too. C. Riley Snorton (2009) extends Butler’s theorisation of relational identity to ‘race’ and racialised gender, via his own lived experience as a Black, no-hormone, non-operative trans man. He nonetheless cautions that, “cultural and social legibility cannot predetermine what is human in every sense”, and further that we must be alive to, “the possibilities for other communities to validate the lives of those who may be culturally illegible elsewhere” (2009: 82). On Grindr, this may speak to the way that the dominant (White, *homonormative* [Duggan, 2003]) gaze reproduces both transphobia and suspicion of ambiguous gender presentations, while also

playing host to a sub-community of users who are trans and “transamorous”, who may join the app specifically to look for and *recognise* each other, in spite of the wider marginalisation they risk by being there. Such considerations highlight the diversity of audiences and *gazes* that Grindr profiles may be addressing; a dynamic that I would suggest generates significant tension between the app’s different user bases (and which I reflect on below by returning to Green’s concept of “sexual fields” [2008b]).

If the profiles on the Grindr grid provide numerous points of identification and benchmarking, then the response rates of fellow users provide a unique kind of feedback mechanism for the accounts of subjectivity contained in profiles. This occurs in a context in which an implicit, working definition of identity as *fluid* is facilitated infrastructurally by the ability of users to change their self-descriptions, profile images, and self-categorisations at will, to convey, for example, more and less racialised, gendered and classed selves (although if fellow users clock these movements, they may nonetheless be read as a sign of inauthenticity). The market feedback mechanism – which I would argue is inextricably linked (in its quantitative component) to the cultural intelligibility of a given subject’s profile - comes in again here, so that for instance, a Grindr user who oscillates between bottom-versatile-top positions, or accents more and less their masculinity through say, one profile photo showing them playing five-a-side, and another portraying them on a dance floor in a state of joyful ‘feminine’ abandon, can assess the scope of the audience for these positions in the rate of responses and unsolicited attention they receive on the app. The degree to which such fluidity – which might be more negatively framed as ‘flip-flopping’ – is rewarded is another matter; my sense is that versatility and fluidity will often be viewed as off-putting and thereby dilute the response rate to a given user’s profile (another example of the tyranny of sexuality’s fixity in action).

The economy of language required to sustain attention or fulfil the infrastructural requirements of online profiles (i.e. strict word or character limits) renders their form akin to what I would call an “elevator pitch” for the self. In corporate parlance, an elevator pitch maintains a focus on the key

messages to be conveyed, aiming at persuasion through economy and eloquence. Thorne and Coupland's (2002) study of gay male and lesbian dating profiles argues that the dominant rhetorical frame used in such profiles is the marketing and self-branding talk synonymous with contemporary consumer capitalism. They term this process "self-commodification". Banet-Weiser has also argued that branding culture has become a pervasive rubric under which contemporary subjects live: "areas of our lives that have historically been considered non-commercial and 'authentic' – namely religion, creativity, politics, the self – have recently become branded spaces... often created and sustained using the same kind of marketing strategies that branding managers use to sell products... (and) increasingly only legible in culture through and within the logic and vocabulary of the market" (2012: 14). In business parlance this state of being is known as the "branded self", and is complemented by the Foucauldian dystopia of the "quantified self"; that self-regulating, *Fitbit*-wearing, endlessly self-categorising neo-liberal subject, reflected here to some degree in Grindr profiles' proliferating range of biometric category options. The introduction of more self-conscious and reflective self-branding into the arena of sex and dating is amplified by the introduction of inter-app functionalities, which, for example, enable Grindr users to embed links to their Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat profiles. So, while Grindr restricts users to a single profile photo (although they can exchange unlimited photos with other users via the app's chat functionality), they can now link prospective partners to their Instagram profile and parade an entire lifestyle. These lifestyles and self-brands are of course highly performative, racialised phenomena, in the process of which 'race' itself may become commodified, reflecting wider processes of racial commodification under neo-liberal, consumer capitalism (Neal, 2013). Again, the double movement between 'race' and desire (and/as sexuality) as objectifying phenomena suggests that both independently and at their intersection, they may lend themselves especially well to such commodification and branding exercises. On the other hand, the deployment of market logics and vocabularies may become a self-fulfilling prophecy for both Grindr users and scholars of Internet dating cultures, since having been told that it constitutes a branding exercise, many users may now consciously approach their online life *as such*; generating in turn abundant

evidence for scholars to parse through this lens. Nonetheless, the effects of market-creep on our subjectivities and the way 'race' is constituted, positioned, and *consumed* are real, tangible, and come through prominently in the thematic analysis below (see for example those profiles where 'race' itself is commoditised).

Reflecting on the importance of market dynamics for self-other relations online, Mowlabocus, in a famous monograph of Gaydar (Grindr's primary antecedent in the UK), argues that the, "consumer/consumed dichotomy is integral to the structure of the profile" (2010: 91). While this consumerist dynamic produces a useful framing of Grindr relationality, the idea of a traditional dichotomy built around discrete positions of consumer/consumed is nonetheless troubled by the fact that Grindr users are one and both – subject and object - at the same time. Nonetheless, the degree to which users have the capacity to inhabit positions of consumer/consumed, and subject/object, cannot be divorced from the highly gendered and racialised terrain on which they unfold, which always-already anchors them to power dynamics which position some Grindr users as more valid or authentic sexual subjects/objects. A Grindr user who is everyone's type – let's say for argument's sake White, gym-buff, "straight-acting", conventionally attractive – has the capacity to inhabit both subject and object positions to a greater degree, depending on their own preference; wait to be consumed and the offers are likely to flood in; go out looking and this user can be relatively certain of a high response rate. According to this dynamic, it is the fact of being *everyone's object of desire* that creates the conditions in which one can be the *ultimate subject of desire*. Mowlabocus' emphasis on the consumer/consumed dichotomy also limns something more specific - and perhaps fundamental - to the hook-up encounter (certainly one of, if not *the* primary ends to which Grindr is put), namely its structuring in terms of objectification and instrumentalisation. Grindr fucks may be here today and gone tomorrow and the options for more and different dick are always proliferating as users come and go (especially in a global city like London, with its rotating cast of tourists and inhabitants). Recalling the double movement of 'race' and desire toward objectification, we have then perhaps a *triple movement*, once these are rendered in terms of the

hook-up. Thus the intersection of the racialisation of desire *as* sexuality on a platform designed – at least in part – to facilitate hook-ups, strikes me as a particularly heady and problematic cocktail, which raises the stakes and potential for injury.

Racialised labour, racialised affects

Like all social media and networking apps, which supposedly fall under the rubric of “leisure”; creating and managing a Grindr profile generates significant emotional and other forms of labour. McGlotten refers to these as, “The forms of work that go into producing, promoting and managing one’s profile... in which affective and other largely intangible forms of work matter a great deal to the erotic excitement that defines the app’s appeal” (2013: 127). Thus according to McGlotten’s account, this sense of labour expended is inextricably tied up with the satisfaction gleaned from using Grindr, where the rewards include forms of sexual and emotional fulfilment. In this competitive context, McGlotten further notes that, “anxiety structures the art of creating one’s online representation” (2013: 67). That creating a profile is an “art” is notable in itself: one must develop *a feel* for the sexual field (or fields; Green, 2008b) in which one manoeuvres, its associated practices and conventions, and a sensitivity to what is most attractive about oneself and most likely to solicit the interest of desired others. With multiple high stakes in play – validation, sexual satisfaction, respite from daily drudgery – it is perhaps unsurprising that anxiety – that *stickiest* of affects - pervades. McGlotten’s accent on anxiety also recalls what Laplanche (1970/1985) termed Freud’s “hydraulic” or “economic” model of sexuality, which formulates it as a build-up of tension requiring release in order to restore a state of (momentary) psychic equilibrium, with the subject seeking out a sexual object as a means to this end. In this libidinal circle game of tension-object-release, there is perhaps no originary point; some object in the world might stir recollections of an internalised erotic/love object, which generates sexual tension that becomes the motor to check into Grindr and find another object through which release is sought. In this case, we might then formulate Grindr as an affective and libidinal vector, charged-up with both the cumulative sexual

tensions of its millions of users, and the anxieties that circulate around their performances of (racialised, gendered) identity, each eagerly seeking to generate a receptive audience.

McGlotten has explored the affective life of Grindr specifically through the lens of Black MSM using the app. He delineates three dominant affects circulating for the users he engages for his research – “anxiety”, “paranoia” and “optimism”. Noting the way that affects circulate and attach to objects on Grindr, McGlotten quotes from Sara Ahmed (2007): “anxiety accretes, “like Velcro: it picks up objects that are proximate to it”” (2013: 67). Anxiety takes on many forms and textures, and in the case of McGlotten’s Black Grindr users, this occurs under the rubric of a default White gay culture (and Grindr gaze) that often oscillates between outright rejection and forms of objectification and instrumentalisation. Of paranoia, McGlotten writes, “Our paranoia indexes the ongoing imprinting of racialised microaggressions that produce powerful speculative fears about the effects racial difference can have not only on one’s chances for getting laid, but for more ontologically essential longings such as being wanted or loved” (2013: 72). “Optimism”, McGlotten defines queerly and against the grain as the potential to generate anti-hegemonic positions through “losing and refusing” dominant discourses, and emphasising that optimism should be, among all things, “interesting” (2013: 74-75). Another defining characteristic of what McGlotten calls “virtual intimacies” is the pre-eminence of *potentiality*, or *what might be*. After McGlotten then, I would suggest that Grindr is saturated with what might be called the definitive affect of the millennial generation, namely *FOMO* (fear of missing out); this affect may also be racialised in turn, if we think about the differential stakes – structured by ‘race’ – of what it means, and how familiar an experience it might be to be the one, “missing out”. Another structuring affect on Grindr is failure. Whatever one’s rates of success, it is a troubling but unavoidable fact about Grindr that it is shot through with failures borne of the messiness of human interaction, and the matching of the more and less specific repertoires of users’ desires. In this context, Grindr *resilience* becomes a psychic skill that one develops in the course of negotiating the app and attempting to regulate one’s affective response to often challenging experiences. In sum, as

well as a libidinal one, Grindr is also an affective economy, and a highly racialised one at that.

Form-ulating 'race' in cyberspace

That Grindr is a profoundly visual medium clearly has implications for the way 'race' becomes configured on the site. As Lisa Nakamura notes of the Internet more generally, "The paradox of digital visibility [...] is that like cinema, it can work to reinstate an understanding of race as always visible and available to the naked eye, a quality to be determined and epistemologically locked down by a viewer rather than understood as contested and contingent" (2007: 207).

Nakamura's formulation prompts us to think about the way visual cultures such as Grindr's invite users to experience 'race' as a commonsense fact, empirically verifiable through observation, and therefore as something determinable by the viewer, rather than the person being viewed. This dynamic was manifest in the anecdote shared by one of my interview participants Giacomo (Case Study 1 in the following chapter), in which he was misrecognised as South Asian by an interlocutor on Grindr. Here, the interlocutor was communicating his racialised reading of Giacomo's profile picture, which showed his cropped torso, deeply tanned from a recent holiday. In this case, the potential for racialised misrecognition may be accentuated by a racialised reading of cropped (headless) torso pictures as a racialised presentational practice more readily engaged in by Black and Asian men, configured as "discreet" or "on the DL/down low" (itself a highly racialised and gendered cultural phenomenon [Snorton, 2014]).

Grindr's sensory repertoire is also constantly expanding, proliferating the registers on which these racialised, gendered performances play out. Initially text and image based, Grindr now allows users to send each other voice notes, introducing an aural register to the visual fantasies that profiles evoke, and an additional terrain on which performances of gender and ethnicity must be convincingly acted out. Grindr scholars have also contended that Grindr incorporates 'touch'. Building on the work of Price (2013) who theorises the eyes synaesthetically as organs of touch, geographer Carl Bonner-Thompson has

argued that men who use Grindr attempt to create digital bodies that are “touchable”, in a way that attracts other users (Bonner-Thompson, 2017). Tina Campt’s *Listening to Images* (2017), which explores the aural frequencies of photography, pushes further this idea of the synaesthetic quality of visual images, which act as objects to feel and think with, evoking a multitude of sensations and affects. Thus, contra the sense of smartphone mediated communications as an exclusively visual affair, they might be formulated to instead as offering a rich visceral and multisensory world of engagement, in which each Grindr user brings to the task of virtual cruising the full range of their senses, with ‘race’ and racialised performances having to work on multiple registers simultaneously. I make these comments here, while noting in turn the limitations of my own analytic methodology, which attends to profiles as linguistic and visual texts, although I would nonetheless maintain that these remain the primary registers on which users engage.

In formulating the way ‘race’ works on and through Grindr, Bruno Latour’s (2005) distinction between two types of technical infrastructures that he calls “intermediaries” and “mediators” may be useful. According to Latour, where intermediaries relay contents without altering them, mediators fundamentally distort and refashion them in particular ways. By this definition, I suggest that Grindr acts as a mediator of ‘race’ and of the racialising and racist material and practices that users engage with on the app. For example, the framing of ‘race’ as simple, incontrovertible, fact is amplified by Grindr’s use of ‘Ethnicity’ as a structuring category of user experience. I note that Grindr refers to ‘Ethnicity’ rather than ‘race’, while recalling that Hall (1989) delineates the ways in which the former becomes a more politically-correct container of racial meanings and representations, while in discursive actuality, the one slides into the other. Given that Grindr – unlike sites and apps like *OkCupid* and *Match.com* – doesn’t use sophisticated personality questionnaires to generate matches between users, the biometric categories within which users are asked to position themselves acquire additional importance. Since all the biometric categories Grindr engages can also be used as ‘filters’ to include or exclude fellow users from view, the inclusion of “Ethnicity” here can be said to facilitate the “ethnic” or racial

“segregation” of Grindr (Robinson, 2015). In this case, Grindr also operates a pay-to-segregate/target model, since “Ethnicity” is positioned by Grindr as a ‘premium’ filter, only available to users who upgrade to their ‘Grindr Xtra’ subscription service (currently £17.99 for one month, with savings if users take out subscription plans). In fact, Grindr is a highly monetised app (it was acquired by a Chinese company in 2018 at a valuation of \$245 million), which generates income through user subscriptions and targeted advertising. This latter revenue stream involves Grindr harvesting information about its users, which it then deploys to facilitate advertisers targeting their messages and/or advertising spend towards particular demographics. In this context, Grindr’s “Ethnicity” filter, and by extension the ‘race’ of Grindr users, can be directly monetised (that is, quite literally commoditised), generating profits for the app’s owners.

From segregation to integration, mono- to multi- culture: establishing racial contact/s on Grindr

To reiterate: as a site of everyday racialising practices, identifications and investments, I am arguing that Grindr becomes a pre-eminent site at which ‘race’ is done and made. Grindr’s infrastructures and the *performative* requirements of the Grindr profile are two of the ways in which this occurs; another is through the interactions of differentially racialised users. We might configure Grindr as what Mary Louise Pratt calls a “contact zone”; that is, “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or *their aftermath as they are lived out across the globe today*” (1992: 4; italics my own). After Mercer & Julien, we might also consider Grindr as an example of the, “everyday sites... of antagonism and conflict – which include sports, the media, music and dancing – where actual men and women of diverse ethnic origins intermingle in the mutual construction of each other’s racial and sexual identities” (1992:102). Such an intersubjective formulation of identity supports the position I delineate above that Grindr is a site where users learn how to *do* ‘race’, gender, and I would add, sexuality (as both social identity and assemblage), defining and benchmarking themselves through the eye of the

other. I would suggest there are at least three registers on which Grindr users learn to do “sexuality” through the app: it is a site at which social categories of difference and othering become eroticised; it is a site at which sexuality as an identity and narrative of self is (co-)constructed and plays out; and it represents a spatial node in multiple sexual fields (explored below), in which the sociality of sexuality *as social identity* becomes a primary inflection point for sexuality *as an assemblage*.

Interestingly, “contact” also emerges as one of two primary (and overlapping) categories of urban interaction formulated by Black gay scholar and science fiction author, Samuel R. Delany (1999), which I suggest also provide a fruitful way to read Grindr. Through the prism of his experiences in gay porn theatres in pre-Giuliani midtown Manhattan, Delaney proposed “contact” spaces as those - like the porn theatres - which bring together people with diverse backgrounds and interests, giving rise to encounters that occur across dominant divisions of class, ‘race’, gender, and age. By contrast, Delany formulates “networking” as concerned with those consciously cultivated spaces in which people with similar interests - and very often of similar backgrounds - set out to achieve particular ends, such as furthering their careers or social status. Delaney defines cruising spaces - of which I would argue Grindr is the contemporary digital iteration - operating under the singular goal of *getting off*, as points of “contact”, which he contrasts with the networking common at academic conferences⁵⁸.

Drawing on my own experiences of the app, I would argue that when Grindr first launched, it felt like a *contact* space in the midst of a *homonormative* (Duggan, 2003) mainstream gay scene that had become preoccupied with *networking* situations, in which MSM were silo-ed according to class, ethnicity, and so-called “Tribes” (in Grindr’s terminology), such as bears, twinkies, jocks, and myriad other racialised porn tropes. The increasing number of filters introduced over the last ten years mean that it increasingly resembles the networking spaces to which it

⁵⁸ Delaney argues fervently in favour of “contact”, suggesting that, “Given the mode of capitalism under which we live, life is at its most rewarding, productive and pleasant when large numbers of people understand, appreciate, and seek out interclass contact and communication conducted in a mode of good will” (1999: 111).

once stood in contradistinction. Grindr has monetised and re-deployed the biometric categories within which it asks users to place themselves by turning these into filters, which in the process allows the Grindr user to sculpt a bespoke app experience that reflects the particularities (and the psychic and experiential foreclosure) of their desires *as* sexuality. A user could for instance (and to take an especially normative example), choose to see only White men, over 6ft tall, who identify themselves as “Top” and “Jock”, and all other Grindr users who do not fit this bill will simply disappear from view. As such Grindr is a highly effective tool for the continual funnelling and narrowing of desire into sexuality; furthermore, I would suggest that combined with the definitional obligations of dating apps (ostensibly to improve user experience for increasing the likelihood of a match), we have further evidence of digital technologies as tools of foreclosure. Filters are further facilitated by the app’s “block” feature, which acts as both a security facility and a means of consigning individual Grindr users – whether one has spoken to them or not – to permanent obscurity. Viewed through the lens of Delany’s formulations then, Grindr has gone from a cross-class/race *contact* space to a perhaps unparalleled *networking* space in under a decade.⁵⁹

Thinking *Grindr*s plural

While the technological infrastructures and affordances of Grindr give rise to patterned behaviours that may be observed universally, in thinking about the cultures of online spaces and apps, we also need to address the imbrications of virtual with local cultures. In his pioneering work on Facebook (in the specific geographic and cultural context of Trinidad), digital anthropologist Daniel Miller concluded that there is not one Facebook, but many, after which I seek to shift to a pluralistic formulation of Grindr, incorporating all the *Grindr*s that exist globally, and even within the same city. I suggest the insight Miller provides is a

⁵⁹ It also strikes me that the contact vs. networking dynamic can be layered with some degree of fruitfulness over the desire vs. sexuality relation I lay out in my own diphasic account of ‘desire *as* sexuality’. Contact speaks to the freewheeling spontaneity of life experience that gestures less toward comfort zones and past precedents than new frontiers, while networking and sexuality represent safe spaces in which can be accessed more of the same.

useful way for thinking about Grindr(s), but that Grindr needs to be pluralised in (at least) four different ways: (1) Like Facebook, Grindr is imbricated with local spaces and cultures, which create geographic and cultural particularities; (2) unlike Facebook, Grindr is enabled by Global Positioning System (GPS) technologies, which means that when a user moves from home to work to social engagements they encounter different Grindr(s) at each step, inflected by the demographics of the local area; (3) Grindr is host to multiple “sexual fields” (Green, 2008b) each with different (racialised) subjects and objects of desire, which rub along more and less unhappily together within the same online space; finally (4) as delineated immediately above, the technical infrastructures and affordances of Grindr empower users to render Grindr in terms of their own identifications and investments.

Laumann et al.’s (2004) extensive ethnographic study of four Chicago neighbourhoods, and the structuring function of geography on the generation of, and potential for, erotic and romantic encounters, attests to the importance of this geography and local amenities on the opportunities available to subjects to make connections. The different areas and quarters of urban locations have traditionally been profoundly structured by factors such as race, class, community cohesion and attitudes to non-normative sexual identities (Ferguson, 2003). In Laumann’s study, this was manifest for Chicago’s MSM community in the form of differential access to gay community spaces and the encounters they facilitated, according to the logics of neighbourhood racial demographics, which, combined with discriminatory practices such as “triple carding”⁶⁰ (Riggs, 1989), worked to keep gay spaces ‘racially’ (and racialised as) White. In some ways, Grindr undermines these structures by bifurcating physical space and instigating a new hybridised, virtual-physical one, which is imbricated with and inflected by elements of the physical social spaces with which it intersects. Move from area to area in London, and the profiles you see on Grindr will reflect changes in the racial and class make-up of the physical area in which you check-in to the app. Thus, the particular ‘racial’ make-up of Grindr, its racialised cultures and

⁶⁰ The practice of asking for an excessive number of proofs of identification in order to preclude entry to a bar/club space, usually deployed against people of colour.

hierarchies, and the extent to which it functions as a *contact zone*, are still to a significant extent functions of local particularity, as much as any Grindr-specific culture or of the app's technical infrastructures and affordances.

In my readings of the profiles that follow, I think it is also important to think about Grindr as a virtual, spatial node in the so-called 'gay community'. In London, given that physical sites of gay male sociality are closing down - a trend that has been attributed to the rise of apps, alongside wider patterns of 'gentrification' (Lucas, 2016) - Grindr may be increasingly configured as an important (for which read: one of the few remaining) site(s) at which the so-called "gay community" convenes. While I reject the existence of a singular, coherent and effective (in terms of its networks of support) 'gay (male) community', I discuss it here because crucially, I think it does have an important life as a discourse with effects, not least in generating feelings of marginalisation for many gay men/MSM. In the vernacular, the monolithic notion of a "gay community" is used to delineate the steadily increasing agglomeration of out-gays into a seemingly coherent culture, identity, and marketing demographic, often without attending to its gendered, racialised and classed aspects. For instance, it is not clear from the dominant formulation "gay community" whether we are talking exclusively about the "gay male" community (the more specific formulation to which I attempt to adhere), or if it covers the lesbian community as well, and if we can include bi men, self-identified queers, and trans and non-binary people; I also delineated at some length in chapter 1 the racialised and classed dimensions of these formations⁶¹. And while it may have been

⁶¹ Within the academic 'Gay and Lesbian Studies' tradition, Herdt and Boxter (1992) deploy the concept of gay community as a reparative space where (always-already) gay men can restore self-esteem through the visibility and engagement of gay peers. However, such a model fails to attend to "gay community" as a site of contestation, exclusion, and oppressive cultural hegemony. Where these things are acknowledged, there is often still an implicit idealisation of the construct, "gay community", so the issue then becomes how we "remove barriers" to those currently excluded. I would suggest the onus should instead be on earning the mantle "community" in the first place, by increasing and expanding the range of non-commercial spaces, activities, and networks of support available to LGBTQ+ identified people (and their allies). In contradistinction, I would formulate our present, profit-driven and atomised gay culture and community as a pedagogic social formation that provides diversely same-sex attracted subjects with a terrain on which to construct an identity through processes of identification, mimesis and benchmarking, which in the process generates its own exclusions, marginalisations, and oppressive regulatory mechanisms. To the extent that it creates social boundaries and given its

historically and politically expedient to found communities on the singular, shared characteristic of aberrant sexuality (even while this problematically collapsed multiple forms of sexual diversity under one homogenising rubric), the contemporary gay community as manifest in mainstream gay culture is a testament to the severe limitations of such a strategy. Mainstream 'gay (male) community' culture – and, I would suggest, the dominant, homonormative, regulatory gaze on Grindr – is by default 'masc4masc' (masculine men seeking masculine men) (Rafalow, Feliciano & Robnett, 2017; Jaspal, 2018), White (Barnard, 2004; Han, 2007; Daroya, 2017), and middle class (D'Emilio, 1983; Berubé, 2001; Ferguson, 2003); all identifications, not incidentally, that facilitate integration into the normative social order. Where it tolerates diversity, this is on the terms of – and for consumption by – this privileged White gay male sexual subject. As an aspirational identity, the ideal homonormative type belies a refusal to accept the ranks of camp, femme, non-White subjects as successfully gay. In this way, camp men can be labelled “throwbacks”, trans people configured as objects of either fascination (drag queens on stage) or disgust (drag queens in the bedroom), and non-White sexual subjects who refuse to “come out” (that is, engage with the dominant colonial categories of sexuality) can be formulated as repressed and living a lie. While I would argue that this gaze does remain dominant, it is crucial to note (not least for the sake of a queer politics of hope) that it does not remain uncontested, and as several of the profiles in my analysis below demonstrate, it also doubles up as a site of *disidentification* (Muñoz, 1999)⁶².

Returning to Grindr as a spatial node in a wider culture, scholars such as Daroya (2018) have drawn on Green's work (2008b) to position the app as a “sexual field” – a formulation that can be pluralised in order to incorporate some of the diversity and particularity of the audiences that the app aggregates. To reiterate

racialised, classed and gendered dimensions, I would also suggest that gay identity, culture, and community can act as psychic and epistemological Trojan horses for same-sex attracted men.

⁶² And while following the movement towards pluralising in this chapter it is tempting to suggest a formulation of communities *pl.*, I would suggest the difference between 'Grindr's' or 'sexual fields' plural and 'communities' is that the first two work more like what Warner calls “publics” (2002) – in essence, they are an audience with some shared investments – while a community implies infrastructures, and a much greater degree of cohesion.

from chapter 1, Green defines a sexual field as arising where sexual actors “with more or less shared erotic appetites congregate in ways that put in high relief structured relations of social and sexual exchange”, and that, “participants actively but unevenly seek its (the sexual field’s) rewards, including rights of sexual choice, social significance, and group membership” (2008b: 27). The rewards Green delineates here reflect some of what I suggest are the benefits and attractions of presenting oneself on Grindr, formulated at the beginning of this chapter in terms of social validation and subjective recognition; and not to mention of course, sex.

A “sexual field” may also be thought of as akin to a sexual “subculture”, and in fact, Green exemplifies his approach with reference to the *clone culture* practiced by some gay men in the nineteen seventies, which had it’s own corporeal standards (muscular, hairy bodies), lifestyle practices (working-out, piercing), and sexual practices (deep fucking and deep throat). Once established, such a field can be seen to work symbiotically on sexuality, creating new norms which inflect the sexualities of participants in the field through processes of identification. Crucially, a field is not a physical site, although it may become manifest in particular physical (and virtual) spaces; as such Grindr may be thought of as a spatial node in a wider sexual field or fields. Building on this formulation, I want to suggest that Grindr emerges as a *site of contestation* because: 1) it has by far the largest user base of any MSM-specific networking app, meaning it is used by all kinds of different sexual actors falling under the “MSM” banner; and 2) this means that Grindr becomes a site at which multiple sexual fields collide. I would add that this contestation is accentuated by the limitations of the uniform category ‘gay’, with multiple sexual fields offering different ideals or *ways to be* gay, all of which converge on Grindr due to its ‘network effect’, which means it has the necessary critical mass of users to render it the most effective space of its kind. Grindr may therefore also be a site at which a contest is unfolding about what it means *to be* – *and just as crucially, not be* – *gay* (and by extension what the ‘gay community’ should and should not be), and who has access to this and other categories of sexual identity, along with the cultural and material resources that accompany them. The stakes of any such

contest may be higher given the scale of those cultural and material resources, which are now significant; LGB (less so T, and rarely Q) diversity has attracted significant corporate sponsorship and wider cultural patronage over the last two decades in much of the US and Europe. In the context of a mainstream gay community formulated as/by, and working in the interests of, White men, these ontological questions about what it means to be gay are also heavily racialised. In the thematic analysis below, I find ample evidence of resistance and *disidentification* (Muñoz, 1999) to dominant paradigms of gay and MSM sociality - processes of refusal that speak to the endurance of forms of agency amidst the structural onslaughts of 'race' and sexuality (to name but two oppressions).

A theoretically-driven thematic analysis of 100 Grindr profiles that discuss 'race'

My aim so far has been to theorise Grindr as a racialised and racialising site of gay male/MSM sociality and "infrastructure of intimacy" (Race, 2015a), in the process providing a context in which both to place the profiles and analyses below, and to parse their conditions of authorship. I now shift to the theoretically-driven thematic analysis of profiles, drawing on the RoDaS framework to highlight: (i) racialised sexualities and identities as historicised 'racial formations' (Omi & Winant, 1986/2014) that intersect with the particular mores of contemporary gay male/MSM cultures; (ii) the play of racialised, gendered identifications through phantasy; and (iii) the usefulness of a critical race lens to read for effects above moot speculation about intentionality.

Theme 1: Whiteness

Defining Whiteness on Grindr

Grinder User (henceforth "GU")-11 is a 41-year-old self-described "Brazilian top", who titles his profile, "TopDaddy". His profile text can be read as distilling the meanings he attaches to Whiteness, which he is explicitly seeking out in a potential partner:

GU11: *“Brazilian Top, refined and honest guy looking for sweet bottom boys. Living some months in London. I love delicate, clever and sweet guys. Female boys and bitches (sic) are also welcome. I prefer 18-30 years-old white guys.”*

Race, age and gender coalesce in GU11’s ideal type, who is young, White and feminine. The sought-after ‘personality traits’ - “delicate, clever and sweet” - could apply to the feminine qualities of his ideal partner, but equally to their Whiteness. The co-presence of these ‘traits’ alongside a clearly gendered and racialised ‘type’ invites a logic of equation, which in turn recalls a particular, historically-anchored, middle-class, White masculinity, associated with refinement and the life of the mind, which emerged in Europe under colonialism and against which so-called “native” masculinities were defined (Wynter, 1994b). Conversely, Blackness has historically been associated with the body, and though Blackness is never mentioned in this profile, I suggest it lingers like a silence, recalling Ann Laura Stoller’s (1994) argument (discussed in chapter 3) that under the colonial episteme of the 19th century, formulations of White European gender and sexuality always leant – however surreptitiously - on an oppositional ‘native’ to provide them with definition.

As a 41 year old Latino “TopDaddy” (the latter a porn trope denoting an older, more rugged masculinity) seeking someone younger, Whiter and more feminine, it appears that the fulcrum of desire on which GU11’s profile turns is an erotics of difference. Within a heterosexist society, this erotics is predicated in the first instance on sexual difference; its displacement onto age, gender role identity, and ‘race’ may reflect the difficulties encountered when same-sex desires are formulated under a rubric of difference in which sexual difference and/or gender cannot be counted on to do the necessary work. By this logic, the emergence of butch/femme gendered roles in both Lesbian, and to a lesser degree gay male communities, may be read as an attempt, through sexuality, to recuperate difference as the organising principle for erotic desire.

In the profile text of a 19 year old White man, GU31, the erotics of difference become rendered as a reductive, but historically pertinent, binary of 'White: not White':

GU31: *"Sexy guys 18-25. So Don't waste your time. Latino, Mixed, Black, Arab to the front. Don't answer to blank profiles unless you send pictures. No time wasters."*

The formulation of erotic desire here in terms of everything that is *not White* – and thereby, in the case of the White Grindr user, everything that is *not me* – collapses "Latino, Mixed, Black, Arab" men into a singular category of desirable objects. The profile may communicate: I want 'racial' difference, but I don't care what type. It struck me that the user conveys both a negatively-inflected identification with Whiteness, and (perhaps linked to this) a need for some other substance – dark matter – to give himself shape and form. Whiteness has largely escaped explicit definition and has instead found it sufficient to position itself as everything that Blackness was not; in fact, Whiteness *needs* Blackness – or more fundamentally "the dark" in Toni Morrison's formulation (1992) – in order to bring itself *into relief*. A more sympathetic reading might be that Whiteness needs Blackness simply to bear itself. The collapse of heterogeneous racial difference into one group also betrays a sense of White ownership over the system of racial classification and the very concept of 'race'; something that is both an historical fact and a troubling spectre of colonialism in the present.

White fantasies of ownership

A more explicit fantasy of White ownership is present in the title of another profile, GU2, who articulates his racialised desire in his title, *"ILoveMyBlack"*. While the use of first person pronouns in relation to expressions of taste is common ("I love my disco music"), the use of a possessive pronoun in relation to 'race' clearly replicates a logic of White ownership of Black people that recalls the racist relations of slavery and colonial domination. Further, while the brevity is in part dictated by the 15 character limit for Grindr profile titles, the reduction

of Black people, or Black men, to their ‘race’, so that the adjective becomes the noun, could suggest an instrumentalisation of ‘race’. This instrumentalisation may in turn reflect both the fleeting and consumerist nature of Grindr encounters – the sense that one gets what one wants before moving onto the next (racialised) *object* – as well as the logic of fetish as it is traditionally rendered, in which the desirer seeks out a particular feature in the other, which – crucially – stands in unconsciously for something else (Freud, 1927). Although in the previous chapter I attempted to nuance the psychoanalytic formulation of “fetish” in order to convey how *ordinary* it is as a structure of desire, I find it difficult to read a line like “ILoveMyBlack” without invoking a more problematising formulation; one in which it is Blackness as an abstract, rather than individual Black subjects, that GU2 is seeking out (and while allowing for the possibility that it could, indeed, be both). This highlights the problems that are generated when desire becomes rendered in terms of categories of social difference and othering – that is, *as* sexuality – but it also suggests a lack of ‘racial’ consciousness and reflexivity, and a wider ignorance on the part of this particular Grindr user.

Ownership dynamics manifest more literally within the sex work market, which is a site at which what Green (2008b) calls the “interconvertability” of forms of capital (erotic, cultural, monetary) becomes especially pronounced. Racialised forms of erotic capital prove especially amenable to conversion into hard currency. GU21 lists themselves as Black and titles their profile, “*BBC Club*”. Their profile text reads:

GU21: “*THE HOUSE OF BBC ESC_ (diamond emoji) BBC BOIS ARE BACK
MORE TO PIC FROM. NEW MEMBER SAHARA WITH HIS 10.INCH*”.

The diamond emoji on Grindr is usually code for a sex worker; in this case, seemingly a group of sex workers who draw on the stereotype of the well-endowed Black male to present themselves to market. The “House of BBC” formulation also recalls the ‘houses’ of the Black, queer ball scene; a subculture that entered the mainstream by way of the documentary film *Paris is Burning*

(Livingston, 1990). In this example then, we can read the discursive product of a specifically Black queer culture (“*HOUSE OF*”) being juxtaposed with an age-old racist stereotype (“*BBC*”); a curious sort of hybridity. “*BBC*” is unequivocally clarified in the final sentence, which informs us about “*SAHARA’s*” “*10.INCH*”.

The image that accompanies this profile is of a group of handsome, topless, muscular Black men smiling for the camera. The surreptitious nature of sex work and the low pixel quality of the profile image both suggest that these men are not actually the “*HOUSE OF BBC*” but rather some likeness of them. If this is the case, it speaks further to the motivations of potential clients, who are most likely paying for the racialised fantasy of a well-endowed Black hunk: a generic image is deemed sufficient to lure them in, since what they’re after is an instrumentalised assemblage of big dick and Black skin. The profile is agnostic about the ‘race’ of potential clients, but, given that Grindr in London is a predominantly White space, it may be assumed to address at least in part a White clientele. In fact, taking into account the need for a not-inconsiderable discretionary income to pay for sex, and generational and racialised patterns of wealth distribution, I would argue it’s fair to assume the target market is more likely to be older and White. The presence of six different men in the profile image, with the update that there are now “*more to pic (sic) from*”, also gives it a multitudinous quality that variously: (1) empowers potential customers, offering them *the right* to choose; (2) hints at fantasies of excess - if you can buy one “*BBC*”, why not treat yourself to two or more? – and, (3) recalls the “fungibility” of the Black body (Hartman, 1997; Spillers, 2003; Scott, 2010), which suggests that the failure of Black subjects to adhere to any of the societal navigation points that make bodies culturally intelligible renders them abstract, *interchangeable*, matter. Scott defines “fungibility” as, “commodification, the reduction to a value of use or exchange” (2010: 222), suggesting the abstraction, and interchangeability of a currency, as well as the ascription of *value*, although the quantity and quality of this value is the purview of markets and market actors/asset owners (in this example, a default White client), not the currencies that circulate within them. Currency thus appears twice here, as both the Black body and the cash that buys access to it.

"Sick with desire for the Other"

A sense of erotic excess was present across several profiles that drew explicitly on colonial fantasies of exotic 'native' sexuality, recalling once again Robert J. C. Young's assessment that under colonialism the (White) English became, "sick with desire for the Other" (1995:2). The following three profiles in particular communicate something of the visceral excess of (racialised) sexual desire (as sexuality) and fantasy. I took these profiles - GU3, GU44 & GU45 - to belong to the same person⁶³. The experience of reading these profiles was (for me, and I suspect, most readers) jarring; they demonstrate an unusually graphic tone, sketching erotic fantasies in far greater detail than you would typically find on Grindr. In this sense alone, the profiles exhibit a lack of sensitivity to Grindr norms that mark them out, frankly, as highly unusual:

GU3. [Title:] *"BBC Gangbang"*. [Profile text:] *"My place as a white sissy is on my knees surrounded by hard and horny Black men. BBC exclusive! Over 3k Black men from 17 countries worshipped. I also run my own professional and discreet sexual worship and cum collection program exclusive to Black men."*

GU44: [Title:] *"Black Only!"*. [Profile text:] *"Early MTF trans woman. Fully dedicated 24/7 worshipper for Black & mixed race men. Owned property and sex slave. No limits or gag reflex. My body belongs to superior and alpha Black men. Preference for raw and group sex but safe and 1on1 is also enjoyed"*.

⁶³ For present purposes this can be thought of as a quantitative rather than a qualitative concern: since the profiles exhibit similar features, I am analysing them together; whether they belong to one or more Grindr users is more a question of the amount of racialised chat/users on the app. I came to the tentative conclusion these profiles might all be by the same person because I came across them in the same geographical area, their demographic stats matched, and the profile descriptions seemed stylistically similar. Two of the profiles also included a partially occluded face picture, which appears to be the same person. On a more general note, as I collected profiles over the course of a year, and given that it is possible to completely alter the appearance of a Grindr profile through updating images and text, it's impossible to know if all of the profiles I collected belonged to unique users; sometimes I may have collected several profile iterations belonging to the same user.

GU45: [Title:] *"Bottom 4 BBC"*. [Profile Text:] *"Sex addict, sissy, cuckold lover and adult entertainer. Exclusive 24/7 worship for Black tops, verse, and bottoms. No limits or gag reflex. Will do anything for a Black man, literally. Impregnate me."*

GU3 is accompanied by a profile image juxtaposing a picture of the author's face alongside a picture of what appears to be a vat of semen. GU45 captions a photo of the author's face with a banner in the style of the famous "I (heart icon) NY" advertisement, doctored to depict "I (heart icon) BLACK COCK". There is evidently a lot to unpack in these profiles. Initially, I want to attend to the way that 'race' appears alongside gender. The profiles self-describe as *"sissy"*, and, *"Early MTF trans woman"*. In queer sexual culture, a *"sissy"* is specifically a male who becomes feminised by another, more masculine, man, and its appearance here alongside an explicit, exclusive desire for Black men can be read as conveying something about the relationship of White and Black masculinities. The threat posed by Black men has historically often been framed in terms of a physically superior masculinity (rooted not least in projections born of the physical violence meted out to these Black bodies by White men), for which White masculinity compensated itself with reference to supposedly superior cultivation and intellect. The dynamic depicted in these profiles draws on this colonial narrative, seeking to re-enact the colonial encounter as a White male *"sissy's"* submission to a *"superior"* Black male, although here, crucially, the terms of this superiority are always-already defined by Whiteness. These profiles also suggest a particular type of identification with Black men, as this Grindr user wants to engage in forms of reverse denigration, to be (GU44) *"owned property, and [a] sex slave"*, to (GU45) *"do anything for a Black man, literally"*. The sense of who is *consuming* and *being consumed* here is complicated: on the one hand the White Grindr user is offering to serve themselves up for 'use' by Black men; on the other, such a scenario delivers for the White user exactly what *they* want, with the Black man reduced (in a historical echo) to the position of accessory. The 'White: Black' binary - and the corresponding values attributed to both sides of this equation - comes out of this scenario untroubled and emboldened. The fantasy of flipping the White-Black/master-slave dynamic also speaks to a

popular trope in gay porn, identified by McBride (2005), that of Black retribution. In this scenario, the weight of history bears down on the 'interracial' encounter, which must be structured as a form of erotic reparations, in which the White participant may be configured as working through eroticised guilt for sins enacted by previous generations; a dynamic that conveniently also meets the sexual needs of the self-same White participant. Scott makes the following point vis-à-vis the "Black top... big Black stud/rapist": "This pairing, especially since it not infrequently is accompanied by more or less explicit narration that finds the Black top "taking revenge" on the white bottom for the injustices inflicted on Black people... has the effect of accentuating racial difference... with the apparently at least somewhat erotic side-effect of assuaging liberal guilt" (2010: 214-215). Reading these profiles through the lens of Scott's argument, we might suggest that this formulation of 'transracial' intimacy accentuates and buttresses racial difference, while the potential for liberal guilt or its assuagement to become eroticised, suggests an erotic-affective register on which the aftermath of colonialism continues to play-out. Importantly, while I have centred my analysis on the White profile author, I'd like to note here that Scott's work – like that of Walcott – also theorises the possibility of reclaiming a subject position of racialised erotic abjection for the Black sexual subject.

The fantasies articulated in these profiles also precisely mirror the old racist trope that ("*hard and horny*") Black men (GU3) pose a sexual threat to White women. As discussed in the previous chapter, Joel Kovel (1970/1986) formulates this fantasy as central to the psychic life of White racism in the United States. Hodes (1993) also traces the origins of this dominant cultural fantasy back to the post-slavery, reconstruction period in the United States, when fear of retribution for the violences of slavery rendered the need to control Black men more pressing. McBride (2005), speaking specifically to the gay male community context, has also theorised that what he calls the "fetishisation" (used here in its more vernacular, rather than the psychoanalytic, sense) and "sequestering away" of these desires generates their potent erotic charge. That White women (and also straight White men, in the form of their unconscious identifications with both White women and Black men) would seek to instigate their own ravaging

by Black men becomes a particularly potent cultural transgression carrying great erotic charge. It makes, in a sense, for a desire that is inherently *queer*. The transgression is also compounded by the related idea that White women might become *exclusively* interested in Black men (a discourse drawn on here by GU45; and GU44, “*Black men only!*”); something summed up in the old racist line, “Once you go Black, you don’t go back!”. The sense here is of White women becoming seduced, captivated, and then *spoiled* by Black men, and these profiles seem to ride the anxieties and taboo that circulate around such a notion.

Transgression also inflects the sense of excess in these profiles. GU44 is available all day, every day, literally, “24/7”, while GU3 wants a “*BBC Gangbang*”, having “*worshipped*” “*over 3k Black [capitalised for emphasis] men from 17 countries*”, which suggests an almost slave-master-like impulse to collect Black men, and betrays their absolute instrumentalisation in the cause of fulfilling the White Grindr user’s needs. Once again, the fungibility, or interchangeability, of the Black body is pronounced; given the context of a hook-up app engaged by some of its users for the facility with which it delivers casual and frequent sexual encounters, a double movement may be at work, a complimentary intersection of obsessions, sex and Black bodies. This instrumentalisation is further evidenced by the final line in GU3’s profile, “*I also run my own professional and discreet sexual worship and cum collection program exclusive to Black men*”, suggesting that Black men are wanted for their bodily fluids, which are being professionally – and obsessively – collected by GU3. Tim Dean (2009) has chronicled the symbolic functions of cum in some gay subcultures, which can be used in sexual practices signifying colonisation, impregnation, and ritual exchange. These functions are also clearly ripe for racialisation with their spectres of colonial domination/submission and the taboo against miscegenation. Here, penetrative sex and the secretion of semen can become metaphors for colonial revenge, reclaiming (corporeal) territory. This is reinforced (GU3) by the explicit pictorial depiction of a vat of purportedly Black men’s semen. This photo is captioned explicitly; “*Over 250 loads of superior DNA from over 170 Black men! Used as lube*”. Once again, there is the sense here of almost-pathological excess, recalling for me the title of Spike Lee’s movie about ‘interracial’ relationships, “Jungle

Fever" (1992). The reduction of Black men to their "loads" and "DNA" also betrays their instrumentalisation as accessories to a White sexual fantasy, which symbolically formulates them as bodily fluids to be collected and used. One has the sense further, that the explicit expression of sexual excess here is a form of sexual activity in itself, intended to provoke taboos and visceral responses in fellow Grindr users. Framed in terms of an identification with the desired Black Other, such an excess cannot be divorced from the excessive, savage, and animalistic depictions of Black sexuality that endure as a legacy of colonialism. This continues today, by a feat of transmutation, in the deployment of Black sexuality to represent *freakiness* for *all* sexual subjects, at times performing a work of labour for White sexual subjects who can borrow/consume artefacts of Black sexuality – the throw-down freakiness of hip hop; the hyper-cool sensuality of *D'Angelo* and the 'soul man' tradition (Neal, 2013); Spike Lee's depictions of liberated Black sexuality in *She's Gotta Have It* – while retaining the binary whereby White is chaste (disciplined and powerful) and Black is freaky (ill-disciplined and marginalised). These projections of carnality were present from the first colonial encounters, and they may, as Weheliye notes, serve a compensatory or justificatory function: "the ascription of excess an enjoyment to the African effaces the violence perpetrated against the enslaved" (2014: 91). That is, the purportedly excessive sexuality of Black people is a projected displacement of the inevitable guilt and shame generated by the violence meted out to Black people, who the White coloniser/slave master cannot, for one moment, risk humanising. We might then also read a double appearance from White guilt in these profiles: once in the form of an ascription of excessive sexual enjoyment, then in the form of being willing to facilitate that enjoyment, to do anything "literally". In the process, subject-object significations slide back and forth; the desiring White *subject* constructs Black hypersexuality as an idealised *object* of desire, then, in practice, flips the script, proposing to become an erotic *object* to meet the needs of the Black sexual *subject*. Read in this way, we can see evidence of why Spillers (2003), Holland (2012) and Weheliye (2014) suggest it is difficult to speak about Black sexuality *per se* (in essence the Black sexual subject might still always-already be a sexual object; conversely, the White sexual subject holds the potential to objectify (and *abjectify*) himself without

forgoing his intrinsic subjectivity). And here then, again, spectres of the colonial, and “the history that hurts” (Hartman, 1997), play out on Grindr. Parsing these dynamics psychoanalytically, we can also speculate that through the oscillation of identification, and the chimerical possibilities of phantasy, the White subject also has the potential to momentarily inhabit the position of the Black subject (as they construe it) and thus of Black sexual enjoyment and, in this case, the position of a projected, idealised masculinity that is the antithesis of the (also-abjected) sissy (while simultaneously shoring up their position as *sissy*).

Theme 2: Racialised gender/gendered ‘race’

Crossdressing and ‘race’: in the *play* of identifications

Racialised excess is also present in the profiles of two self-identified “TVs”, an acronym often used to denote a range of trans-identities, including ‘transvestites’, ‘crossdressers’, and so-called ‘T-girls’. I have analysed these two profiles together as they share rhetorical features, and because they both exhibit a dynamic which I think shines a light on a particular intersection of ‘race’ and gender as they work through ‘*desire as sexuality*’.

GU46: [Profile title:] “TV Slut”. [Profile text:] “Fat Ass White Bitch. Here to fulfil the sexual needs, fantasies and desires of straight Black men. NO PICS? NO REPLY! SIMPLE”

GU69: “White bottom for BBC. For all the ignorant, it isn't racist, it's just a preference! Big, round white bubble butt for Black men to use and enjoy.”

Both profiles invoke the Black top/White bottom trope that is dominant in pornographic representations of Black-White ‘interracial’ sex. This again reproduces binaries of Black: White, Intruder: Intruded; Spoiler: Despoiled, hinting at the circulation of guilt and reparative phantasy explored above. In both instances, Blackness is associated with masculinity and Whiteness with femininity. This dynamic reflects dominant tropes of Black and White

masculinity in gay male culture, which in turn invert historic racialised dynamics of the domination, marginalisation and othering of Black men, which has often been achieved through techniques of 'emasculatation' (hooks, 1992; Hill-Collins, 2006). While the fact of one half of a couple cross-dressing to restore the impression of gender heterogeneity might arguably obviate the need for 'race' to serve a metonymic, gendering function; another way of reading these profiles would be that the insecurity circulating around a 'dragged' performance of femininity in the case of "TVs" is drawn to the scopic certainty of 'race' to secure the reproduction of a heterosexual erotics of difference. This dynamic again recalls Butler's (2004) argument that one is always doing gender *for* another, that gender - and 'race' - are inherently intersubjective performances. In addition to the process of identification always containing *both* the desire *to have* and the desire *to be*, this inter-subjectivity also further emphasises the proximity of identity and desire; what one desires may be the thing that will most shore-up one's identity.

Since the Black, male top being sought out is explicitly framed by GU46 as "straight", then we might also speculate that the accoutrements of female drag that adorn the "TV" provide a veil under which to explore elements of non-normative sexuality. These accoutrements – make-up, wigs, heels, stockings, G-strings - themselves also hint at the fetishistic nature of gendered desire; they generate desire for the *female* other, and perhaps especially so where this femaleness operates under a question mark. The inter-subjective encounter constructed through these profiles also provides an example of what Snorton suggests is the ability of subjects who are rendered culturally unintelligible within dominant paradigms to find (or create) spaces in which such intelligibility *is* an affirmative possibility (Snorton, 2009).

As in the previous three profiles, both GU46 and GU69 ostensibly accent enjoyment and control in terms of Blackness, and maleness. The pleasure to be had from Whiteness and femaleness derives from a staged submission, in this case both to the Black man himself, and more broadly, to a well-worn colonial script. The power dynamic here is significantly more complex than the manifest

‘submission’ to the “sexual needs, fantasies and desires” of Black men described by GU46. GU46 also reintroduces the transgression trope through the co-presence of the title “*TV Slut*”, with the profile text’s delineation of her interest in Black men. GU69 suggests an expedient identification with ‘Black culture’, in framing her attributes in terms of a “bubble butt”, fulfilling a stereotype that Black men like big arses. Her immortal line, “it isn’t racist, it’s just a preference”, addressed specifically to the “the ignorant”, also neatly condenses the ‘preference’ discourse, while hinting at the anxiety that circulates around it and how other users may construe it, with the “just” here indicating an attempt at pre-emptive foreclosure. ‘Preference’ here becomes a way of shutting down thought – and discussion, and feelings – about racism (Gregorio-Smith, 2018), in this case with the added twist that the ignorance usually associated with racism is projected out onto anyone who might question the role ‘race’ plays in this user’s desires.

Another immortal line is paraphrased by GU60, who formulates their own version of, “No fats, no femmes, no Asians”:

GU60: *“sucker looking to suck. Can suck for long while u relax. Only into clean guys. Not into camp, fem or asian.”*

Putting “camp”, “fem” (sic) and “asian” (sic) side by side and in list-form constructs a sliding equivalence between the three terms, reflecting another colonial stereotype about the purported emasculation and castration (Eng, 2001) of the (especially South East) Asian male (as I discussed in the chapter 1, it is important to bear in mind that this discourse replaced another one in which Asian men were positioned as sexual predators, with laws enacted in the US specifically targeted at this supposed menace). This stereotype endures in the present; as Eng (2001) has argued, Asian men are often symbolically *castrated* in contemporary cultural representations. That GU60 frames their sexuality in terms of a rejection of Asian men as sexual *objects*, combined with the sexual *aim* of sucking dick also clearly tallies with this cultural myth of phallic absence (while limning the racialised, gendered imbrications of sexual objects and sexual

aims wherein particular sexual acts are associated with particular 'racial' formations).

Beyond a historicised reading of racialised sexual stereotypes, I also want to suggest that we are back on the terrain of the erotics of difference, for which race as rendered through sexuality provides a near-unsurpassable source of inspirations. As an enduring 'dividing line', 'race' proves itself both a highly effective container for difference, and a site of boundaries and crossings. As hooks notes, these crossings contain the lure of profound and unknown pleasures: "One acts... on the assumption that the exploration in the world of difference, into the body of the Other, will provide a greater, more intense pleasure than any that exists in the ordinary world of one's familiar racial group" (1992: 24). While 'race' can never be reduced to a matter of 'difference' alone, and while racialised desires (*as* sexuality) can never be evacuated of their specific historic and political spectres, the potency of 'race' and the racialised organisation of sexuality may rest in part on its delivering so effectively the seductive erotic logic of difference on which much desire pivots.

Abjected 'race' and sexual subjectivities

Racialised subjects may respond to colonial stereotypes in different ways (Poon & Ho, 2008; Han, 2009), according to a complex range of factors including (but certainly not exhausted by) gender identifications, physiognomy, and the epistemological frames to which subjects are exposed, and within which they live their lives. For some South East Asian men, the stereotypes about Asian masculinity may prove ostensibly non-problematic and productive, as is suggested by profile GU85, who describes themselves as:

GU85: *"Thai sub boy for dominant sugar daddy ☺"*.

This short sentence re-enacts a colonial power dynamic in terms of 'race', gender, sexuality and capital. While the 'race' of the sought after sugar daddy isn't specified, the other half of the equation, a "Thai sub" who desires masculine

dominance and economic security, couldn't be clearer. The addition of a smiley face emoji could be read as conveying both a sweetness (supporting the profile user's stated subject position) and a *knowingness* about the ubiquity/normativity of the dynamic proposed. Sugar daddy is also typically used to refer to older, economically-stable, or affluent, men, again suggesting the interconvertability of 'erotic capital'; in this case youth in exchange for hard currency. At the level of subjectivity, the subject position of the "Thai sub" profile author could be read as a site of disidentification; and the author may be deriving great pleasure and other spoils from his sex and dating life. At the level of the social though, it presents troubling questions about the challenges faced by racialised subjects in seeking to move beyond racist and colonial epistemes. If, after Fanon (1967), we formulate the Symbolic as always-already saturated with the White man's idea of 'race', and if desires must necessarily be rendered as sexuality, through the prism of language and culture, then the inscription of racist scripts onto the minds and bodies of racialised subjects (through, for instance, the dominant representational tropes of mass media and gay male pornography) becomes a way in which colonialism perpetuates itself (at the level of the social, and mediated by the racialised subject's ability to recuperate control through *disidentification*).

An awareness of racist epistemes and the pressure they exert on desire can produce anxiety, as for instance, through the long-standing debate within Black communities about whether a 'preference' for non-Black women renders Black men inevitably self-hating and internally racist. The following three profiles of Black Grindr users could potentially be read in terms of this argument:

GU14: [Title:] "4Skinny". [Profile text]: *"(Back in the gym [winking face emoji]) Look to date white skinny chav twinks/Androgynous/CD/TV/TS genuine friendship and hopefully more, SLIM/SKINNY ONLY. Not interested in NSA, love CHAV/SCALLY lads too. FFS Not interested in Black, indian or older guys WHATSOEVER."*

GU36: [Title:] *"Top of the Tops"*. [Profile text:] *"Reply - Location/ into's/ likes? Before asking for mine. No Blk guys (moon face emoji) - Bi - iTop, iDom, 9" inch, Discreet, 100% Clean. Blocking me really don't affect me. Subs (worship hands up emoji) - BUBBLE BUTTS (peach emoji=ass)"*.

GU47: [Profile title:] *"Give me your mouth"*. [Profile text:] *"Milk me with your mouth (kiss emoji; aubergine emoji=dick; milk bottle emoji). Sexy smooth young white guys."*

In the first two profiles (GU14 and GU36) Black men are explicitly dismissed as potential partners, while the latter profile (GU47) formulates desire in terms of a preference for White men. In GU47's profile we see the instrumentalisation of 'race' and the impersonality of intimacies on Grindr coalesce in particularly heady form in the command to *"sexy smooth young white guys"*, to *"give me your mouth"*. All three users seek to adopt 'top' penetrative roles most typically associated with Black men in gay porn. The dialectic nature of porn, which provides an increasingly prominent pedagogic function (Maddison, 2013), and IRL sexual encounters remains an underexplored avenue of research into contemporary sexual cultures, and I will again resist the temptation to suggest a strictly casual relationship. What I think is beyond doubt however, is that porn provides rich grounds for (especially erotic) identifications, and that along with the wider colonial and racist tropes that give rise to porn scripts in the first place, a 'common sense' understanding of 'race' and sex is perpetuated in which it seems that Black men 'really' are more likely to be top, and Asian men bottoms. This is present too when – as a number of profiles demonstrate – Black men define themselves in terms of their genitalia through the recurring acronym, "BBC". One of the most economical profiles is GU28, who lists themselves as 25, Black and top:

GU28: [Profile title]: *"BBC"*.

There is no accompanying profile text. The reduction of the Black man to a symbolically-loaded skin colour (Fanon, 1967), and a part of the body, the

genitals (Hall, 1992), is presented here as a natural fact (the racialised acronym speaks for itself) and a *fait accompli*. That the profile's author is a Black man who (we are led to believe in any case) is well-endowed, and adopts the top/penetrative position in bed, means that he fits the ideal requirements of Black men on Grindr and in gay male culture. On this basis, the lack of further details could be read reflecting their superfluity; say no more - the offers, we can presume, roll in. The perpetuation of racist tropes - which has material effects on all Black men - is certainly problematic, but when sexuality is also in the frame, it inevitably complicates the picture. For GU28 specifically, the stereotype of the "BBC" may impart a sense of sexual agency, while producing pleasure; it brings men to his door and fulfils a culturally intelligible erotic script, predicated on processes of identification, and forged through the consumption of porn and other cultural artefacts. As Mark Anthony Neal notes (2013), Black men especially are rewarded for the *intelligibility* (conformity to a well-worn script) of their performances of racialised masculinity, and here those rewards may come in the form of a large audience of potential suitors. It also matters who utters a statement, and while it clearly isn't the place of White men to perpetuate the "BBC" trope, in the case of GU28, the picture arguably becomes less clear. And when not only the utterer, but also the audience, is Black men, it may become murkier still. In this case "BBC" could instead be viewed as a form of reclamation equivalent to the use of the n-word in some domains of Black cultures. A second instance of the "BBC Club" appeared in the form of GU24:

GU24: [Profile:] "*BBC Club*". [Profile content:] "*private/adult night/group sex catering for hot sexy Black guys only.*"

In this case, "BBC" is used as a lure to other Black men to join a 'racially'-exclusive club of (we are led to believe) well-endowed men, who the accompanying profile picture depicts as muscular and handsome. On one hand, there is nothing to preclude anti-Black racism from working through the minds and profiles of Black Grindr users. On the other, the profile's exclusion of non-Black men and its emphasis on group enjoyment, big dicks, and sexual excess might be read as a form of disidentification (Muñoz, 1999) with dominant tropes

of Black masculinity, by which these become rendered as both a source of pleasure and a feat of resistance against the dominant White gaze on Grindr.

Conversely, other Black Grindr users simply called out such language, as in the profile below, which refers to, “Black fetishising chat”:

GU9 (Black): [Profile text:] *“Dom bi lad here, visiting London. After fun and chats. Can't accom⁶⁴ btw. Into toned/muscly/twink lads and love a nice (peach emoji - ass) esp in a jockstrap (monkey covering eyes emoji). No Black fetishising chat please. Also I don't send face on here, take it or leave it.”*

The demand, “No Black fetishising chat” invokes an anti-racist discourse that explicitly circumscribes other Grindr users from instigating communication predicated on sexual stereotypes, with “BBC” constituting a primary instance of such chat. In the course of conversations I have had with Black Grindr users I have also been told stories of their being inundated with unsolicited pictures of White men getting fucked/fucking Black men, of supposedly humorous enquiries as to the veracity of certain ‘flattering’ stereotypes about Black men, and about the presumption that Black men are ‘tops’. My interview participant Trevor noted that many of his Black friends regularly encountered this presumption. In the course of describing what he believed White Grindr users sought out from Black men (“six pack, muscles, big dick, top”), he spoke about one of them:

“A friend who says whenever they say, “Oh but I’m bottom by the way”, chat ends, stops there. Not what they’re looking for. I’ve seen messages saying to someone, “Oh you’re bottom, would you top me?” So, “I’m willing to overlook that you’re bottom as long as you can”.

In these two examples, one Black friend experiences repeated rejection because of his preferred sexual role, while another experiences a demand from White men to perform according to established scripts. It strikes me that this latter

⁶⁴ “Accom” = accommodate or host the meet.

example can be read in terms of the White man hailing (invoking the spectre of Althusser's policeman [1971/2001]) the Black man to perform according to the conventions of his racialised, racialising and racist script; a hailing which, in the queer of colour tradition of disidentification (Muñoz, 1999), Trevor's friend refuses.

Theme 3: Subjective mediation, resistance, and agency

Black Grindr/s

Contra the evidently pervasive desire for 'racial' difference, many of the Grindr profiles I collected conveyed a desire for 'racial' sameness. This is not to say that an erotics of difference is not still present, but the work of difference performed by 'race' may be displaced, and the boundary crossings happen elsewhere. Among LGBTQ+ people of colour, love of 'racial' and gender sameness can be read as a form of resistance to White supremacy and heterosexuality (a resistance which, nonetheless, I do not mean to frame in terms of a rationalist, political intervention). In fact, the most common expression of racialised desire among the profile set I collected was Black Grindr users seeking other Black men. Taken together, these added up to a kind of *Black Grindr* (or more likely *Black Grindr*s plural) representing its own sexual field/s, with its own erotic tropes and lingua franca.

GU17 (Black): [Profile title:] *"Roadmen only"*. [Profile text:] *"Xx"*.

GU27 (Black): [Profile title:] *"Black guys wys"*. (wys=what you saying).

GU57 (mixed): [Profile text:] *"yo! Mandem on the streets n bitch in the sheets! Banter, friendship and amazing sex! If the foreplay ain't right you ain't entering the bussy lol. Yes lots of kissing. Only into Black/mix guys! Im very discreet non scene guy. No face pics sorry (devil emoji, snide eyes emoji, kiss emoji)"*

GU52 (Black): [Profile title:] *"Keep Winning"*. [Profile text:] *"My display pic keeps getting rejected (hands up emoji). Hygiene is paramount. Not desperate. I drive and accom. Fun is good. Black and mixed only please. DL. DownLow. Discrete."*

GU27 addresses Black men directly and exclusively, conjuring in the process a Black queer *counterpublic* (Warner, 2002), one that constitutes its own sexual field in the context of the dominant Whiteness of Grindr and the wider 'gay community'. Here the use of Grindr's material infrastructure by Black men, for Black men, may be read as constituting another form of resistance. That is, by adapting Grindr's technological, geographic, and sexual convenience for a non-White audience, the profiles above engage in a mass disidentification (Muñoz, 1999) with Grindr, symbolically hacking its infrastructure to serve the needs of a sexual and romantic community of Black men, that explicitly excludes Whites (and other racial groups). *Black Grindr/s* will of course come with their own regulatory strictures, since Black – like White – sexuality is constituted by desires strained through the prism of the social; in turn, these regulations may provide further points of disidentification for queer and other resistant subjects.

The direct address to a Black audience in GU27's profile, is extended via the use of 'Black' cultural references and tropes, including "Roadmen" (GU17) and "Mandem" (GU57). "Roadmen" is heavily racialised vernacular slang for tracksuited young men, associated with a free-wheeling, hustling life 'on the road' (and which, having become mainstream, is now - predictably enough - being monetised by clothing brands like Asos, which recently offered customers "road man style" socks). To demonstrate the point, GU17 has chosen a profile image of a group of tracksuit-clad young Black men who convey a stereotypically 'roadman' aesthetic. "Mandem" originates in the Caribbean and has become popular London slang for a group of young men hanging out; like "roadman", it is both racialised as Black and synonymous with London Black communities. Both "Roadman" and "Mandem" imply a sort of 'bros club' of masculine performance that could be considered the antithesis of 'camp', a gay male convention that we might racialise conversely – and very specifically, within this context - as a White

gay convention (specifically, because I am keen not to elide the ranks of unapologetically effeminate Black gay and queer men). Further, it is likely that some White Grindr users (though dwindling in number) would not know what terms like “road men” or “mandem” mean, and thus they prove efficacious at excluding an unwanted audience. GU52 invokes another trope of Black same-sex desire in the reference – repeated thrice for emphasis – of “*DL. DownLow. Discrete.*” This kind of ‘discretion’ has become synonymous with Black men who seek sex with other men, but do not want to live a socially-gay identity. Like the ‘bros club’ terminology of GU17 and GU57, within Black communities, ‘DL’ may also imply more ‘masculine’ men who don’t wear their gayness on their sleeves, standing in contrast to the boisterous and hysterical feminine excess that may be associated with gay men. Tracing the cultural phenomenon of the ‘down low’ to the early nineteen nineties, C. Riley Snorton has written an extended critique of the ‘DL’ discourse as one that slots into a longer history of positioning Black sexualities as always-already duplicitous, perilous and degenerate (Snorton, 2014). Consequently, Snorton theorises the ‘DL’ as a remix of the age-old discourse of Black sexual danger; a discourse underscored in the nineties by concerns that DL Black men were acquiring HIV and transmitting it to their straight female partners. In the present context, it must be noted that the meaning of ‘DL’ has expanded beyond the ranks of men who have girlfriends and sleep with other men; it may instead denote a sexual subject – most typically racialised as non-White, if not Black – who is ‘discreet’ (which may be read as lacking flamboyance as much as being closeted), and refuses an identification with mainstream gay male culture. The ubiquity and utility of the ‘DL’ label deployed between Black sexual subjects may thus speak to a number of identifications being performed simultaneously, for example: an affirmative disidentification (Muñoz, 1999) with White gay male culture and community; a positive identification with racialised forms of (hyper-)masculinity; and a recuperative identification with the idea of Black sexuality as queer, in terms of the figure of the “freak”, who is “funky” and good in bed (recalling Robert Reidd-Pharr’s assertion that: “The myth of our potent sexuality... has been not only a great burden but also one of the most potent means by which we have resisted – or at least adapted – racist and racialised oppression” [2007: 32]). Reidd-Pharr’s

positioning of Black *freakiness/funkiness* as *both* a burden *and* a form of resistance (recalling, again, Muñoz, 1999) is illustrated in this analysis by its *tropified* appearance as an object and projection of White sexual obsession (see “Sick with desire for the Other”) and a means of reclaiming Black sexuality for Black subjects.

“Not into white guys”

While the formulations above work by privileging Black men, the following two profiles explicitly exclude White men, while including all other racial and ethnic groups.

GU3 (Black): [Profile text:] “*Under 22. Must have a face pic. Not into white guys*”.

GU43 (mixed): [Profile title:] “*I heart melanin*”. [Profile text:] “*Masculine athlete for same. Prefer dudes - from olive to dark melanin (Mediterranean to mixed & Black dudes). Blank profiles & no (camera emoji=pics) = no response*”

In GU3’s profile, an economical description of his desired other conveys three key criteria: be young, willing to show your face, and anything but White. Unlike in the earlier *Black Grindr* profiles then, other racial and ethnic groups are now included in the fold. The specific exclusion of White men turns the tables on the traditional perpetrators of racism and ‘racial preference’ on Grindr. GU43’s profile frames their racialised desire in terms of an aesthetic preference for darker skin, such that (presumably anyway) tanned White men hailing (or descended) from Southern Europe may still apply. As I explore in the following chapter, in the particular ‘racial’ context at play in London, people of Mediterranean ethnicities may be associated with particular forms of *subordinated* Whiteness, a literally and figuratively *blackened* one. On this basis, while GU43’s profile to some degree reduces ‘race’ to a question of aesthetics, their skin-colour criterion still has the effect of specifically excluding the

Northern European White men who may be associated with dominant forms of Whiteness. An effect of this – as for White Grindr user GU31 above, who was seeking out partners who were *anything but* White – is also to erect a ‘racial’ binary (as opposed to a hierarchy) which is literally White: Black; Light: Dark; West: and the rest; sexuality here becomes a site at which we can see the contested boundaries and logics of Whiteness and ‘race’ thinking come into in high relief.

Another profile (GU49) frames the author’s dispreference for this ilk of White men in more coded, if violent, terms, which also explicitly inflect the racial formulation with class:

GU49 (mixed): [Profile title:] *“notyourtype”*. [Profile text:] *“cuddles, coffee, chats, maybe more. Live southeast, work all over the uk. I will never have time for guys from Clapham & your racist grandma should drink bleach.”*

Here, I take *“guys from Clapham”*, especially as it is qualified with reference to *“racist grandmas”*, to mean a particular sort of upper-middle-class White man who moves to London from (typically) the home counties to pursue a corporate career, and enjoys the agglomeration of bourgeois fellow-travellers found in the leafier parts of Clapham. The somewhat odd solicitation to these men’s *“racist”* grandmother’s to *“drink bleach”*, shores up this reading, providing a particularly violent anti-racist image, which tells White racists to steer clear. In GU49’s profile title, *“notyourtype”*, there is also an implicit attempt to problematise the ‘preference’ discourse, most typically associated with the rights of White gay men to target and exclude particular ‘races’ from their potential Grindr matches. Formulating ‘preference’ in terms of *“type”/s*, GU49 anticipates racialised and other forms of rejection from White Grindr users - to which this profile appears to be addressed - and gets in there first (this also recalls McGlotten’s discussion of *“anxiety”* and *“paranoia”* as dominant structuring affects of Black user experiences of Grindr). In this profile, it is not White men as an entire group that are excluded, but particular White men, and thus alongside the problematisation

of 'preference' is a *disidentification* (Muñoz, 1999) with a form of middle-class, White gay culture.

Reclaiming and problematising 'preference'

While GU49 problematises preference, other profiles reclaim it, in a way that may also be considered a form of resistance to 'preference' in its traditional guises:

GU6 (Black): [Profile text:] *"Blk 4 Blk/Mixed Blk. Bottom if it gets to that and hella good at oral (tongue out emoji). Let's have a laugh if we click, we can take it from there... Just like everyone else I do have a preference Black or Black mixed only."*

GU59 (Asian) [Profile title:] *"Sucker"*. [Profile text:] *"Asian guy love (heart eyes emoji)"*.

GU6 engages an interesting rhetorical strategy of universalising 'preference' in order to legitimise, and then particularise, it, *"Just like everyone else, I do have a preference Black or Black mixed only"*. Authored by a Black Grindr user, this statement potentially reclaims 'preference' from White men as a way of explicitly excluding this group as potential partners and refocusing erotic attention on fellow Black and "Black mixed" men. Although this does nothing to upset the common sense logic of sexual preferences or types, its deployment against the 'racial' group with which it is most synonymous, and in the context of a majority White space, potentially acts as a form of resistance.

GU59 re-centres desire in terms of fellow Asian men, who are a common target of exclusionary statements of preference. This is especially pertinent as the profile's author is looking for a 'top', a sex role from which Asian men are stereotypically excluded. The affirmative statement, *"Asian guy love (heart eyes emoji)"*, implicitly challenges the need to exclude in favour of an approach that builds up an abjected group, without denigrating any others. A seemingly simple

statement of love for Asian men, by an Asian man, takes on enhanced social resonance if we consider Han's (2007) argument that one of the most painful aspects of the Asian experience of gay male communities is Asian men's seeming lack of desire for each other ("Asian men are undesirable in the eyes of most queer white men. What continues to haunt me... is that these narratives also illustrate our acknowledgement that we are undesirable to each other"). As explored in chapter 3, Eng (2001) has formulated this sexual rejection of Asian men by Asian men in terms of a melancholic identification with their racial identity, predicated on the psychic process of incorporation.

Other profiles also referenced the 'preference' discourse while moving beyond it. GU39's author demonstrates a desire to define desire against 'race':

GU39 (Black): [Profile text:] *"Open to ALL races, especially if distinctive in look and appeal. LTR orientated but goin with flow until I find that compatible complimentary companion. I prefer quick meet'n'greet over the long excessive chat. If I send pix, kindly state if not your type!"*

Here, 'race' is rejected as an appropriate ground for desire. Implicit in the qualification *"especially if distinctive in look and appeal"*, is a recognition that racialising logics of desire reduce difference to a matter of 'race' and collapse the diversity within racial groups in the process. Instead, GU39 makes an explicit appeal for difference – formulated as 'distinctiveness' – while explicitly precluding 'race' being the ground on which this is built (the importance of 'difference', which I argue is a primary structure of desire, is further accented by the emphasis on complementarity in the second line). The emphatic intent here is present in the capslocked *"ALL (races)"* in the profile's opening statement. GU39 was one of a number of profiles that demonstrated a political reflexivity regarding the politics of sexuality within gay male communities. GU63 provides another example:

GU63 (White): [Profile title:] *"Made in Greece"*. [Profile text:] *"Doctor on a masters degree. "Can you take 9 inches? Why, are you gonna fuck me 3*

times?" (Crying with laughter emoji) Remember, Black trans women and femme (queen emoji) got us the rights we have today, masc4masc guys haven't done shit for anyone."

With this last statement - "*Remember, Black trans women and femme (queen emoji) got us the rights we have today, masc4masc guys haven't done shit for anyone*" - the profile's author locates themselves in a discourse of politics. The appearance of *overtly* political discourse on Grindr profiles (while acknowledging the political nature of *all* the issues in play here) was also a feature of my interview with Giacomo (written up as Case Study One in the following chapter), who described noticing a massive increase in political chat (and flag emojis) on the app around the time of the Brexit referendum in 2016. This suggests the importance of Grindr as a site of gay male/MSM/queer sociality, while limning the stakes involved in making it a place where users feel safe, regardless of their sexual, gender, 'racial', ethnic, or class identities, their disabilities or their adherence to culturally-intelligible *ways to be gay*. Rejecting the preponderance of men seeking out masculinity - a totem of the so-called 'homonormative' consumerist gay mainstream - GU63's profile implores fellow Grindr users to remember their history, and who fought for their rights, framing this explicitly in terms of both 'race' and gender. The "masc4masc" (masculine for masculine) crowd, we are reminded, "*haven't done shit for anyone*". Why then, the author implies, should *they* get all the dick? The same queer political intent is present in the profile of GU66:

GU66 (White): [Profile text:] "*Vers guy looking for friends and FWB⁶⁵. Often looking for a third with my boyfriend. Please send a pic if you don't have one. No racists, femmephobes, body shamers, transphobes please. FtM friendly! No drugs and safe.*"

Here, instead of framing their desire in terms of the dominant discriminatory axes of social identity or beauty/body standards, it is those that engage in such

⁶⁵ FWB = "friends with benefits", or recurrent casual sex, likely accompanied by greater intimacy than a one-off fuck.

practices that are explicitly excluded as potential partners. Instead of demography, it is discourse and behaviours that become the grounds for a judgement about whether someone constitutes a desirable partner. Without a defined ideal other, and with a focus on group sex with his boyfriend, GU66 also seems to invoke something of the Foucauldian formulation of pleasure, which Foucault defined in contradistinction to 'desire' (Foucault, 1978/1998). Through a conscious refocusing of sexual appetites away from the subjectified realm of desire rendered *as sexuality*, and towards the more strictly sensory experience of 'pleasure', Foucault proposed that the ways in which power works through desire – creating pleasure in the process – might be effectively resisted. Nonetheless, these kinds of radical political intent remain a minority on Grindr, which in its material infrastructures and culture perpetuates sexuality as the lens through which sexual appetites must be filtered. In turn, this amounts to a maintenance of the status quo that is both good for business, and reflective of dominant patterns in the psychic and social organisations of contemporary gay subjects' libidinal energies.

Taken as a whole then, the profiles collected here - which represent one part of a larger sample, the entirety of which was worthy of comment – attest to a number of aspects of the racialisation of desire as it becomes rerouted through Grindr users' sexualities. In the first instance, they testify to the ubiquity of the racialisation of 'desire *as sexuality*', and the frequency and ordinariness with which it becomes manifest in explicit terms on Grindr profiles. This is also attested to by those profiles that explicitly call out racism and racist practices on the app. The profile set also testifies – I hope – to the fruitfulness of the Black and 'quare' studies reading lens as a tool for decipherment (Wynter, 1992/1996). Tracking profiles for the presence of spectres and sedimentations of our 'racial' pasts in the present, particularly the endurance of racialised colonial and slavery narratives as these become reconfigured in contemporary gay male/queer/MSM contexts, this decipherment practice facilitated thinking about how the sexualities constructed in Grindr profiles draw on history to position racialised self and other in particular ways. This is not a question of the intentionality of the author, but of the work of racialised and racist discourses as they move

through 'desire *as* sexuality'. I believe the endurance of these narratives speaks to the uniquely productive potential of 'desire *as* sexuality' for 'race' as a site at which to reproduce itself. These historical discourses clearly also provide points of both identification (thinking especially about Muñozian disidentifications [1999]) for subjects who do not always deploy them in predictable ways. An emphasis on the desired self- and other- more or less explicitly conjured through these texts also further limns the relationality of 'desire *as* sexuality' and the identity positions that gird it. Reading historically-anchored discourses of 'race' through this psychoanalytic lens begins to collapse – at least psychically – the distinction between subject and object that 'desire *as* sexuality' – mediated through phantasy – can facilitate. At the very least, this attests to the complexity of the nexus of 'race'-history-desire-sexuality, and here, technology. Besides the historical patterns, the profiles also attest to both the diversity of the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality': scripts get flipped and reworked, even if the original always gets retained as a point of reference or origin. While some of the profiles also testify to the dominance of the White gaze in Grindr culture – and extrapolating out – gay male culture more broadly, this fact is complicated by the co-situation on Grindr of racialised sub-communities, such as what I call *Black Grindr/s*, within which profiles often directly address each other, excluding other (especially the presumed default, White) racialised subjects.

While Grindr profiles have provided a site of condensation for a decipherment practice that grapples with the historic and psychoanalytic features of the historical discourses of 'race' as they move through 'desire *as* sexuality', it is limited here to a delineation of subject positions. In the next chapter, I seek to capture something of the lived experience of racialised subjectivities and sexualities by way of the *subject in* racialising and racist discourses, as these are deployed to structure biographical narratives of participant sexualities.

Chapter 5 ~ ‘RoDaS’ in the interview room: case studies exploring lived experiences of racialised sexual subjectivity among White and Black MSM

Having applied my racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’ framework to theory, and in the specific context of Grindr, I now move onto the final strand of enquiry; the case studies of biographical interviews conducted with White and Black MSM. In formulating the interviews as staged snapshots of subjectivity, which allow me to access *something* of the textures of the lived experience of racialised identities and sexualities, I hope to make the case for the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’ as both an inherently *psychosocial* and *particular* formation. As I argued in chapter 1, much of the work in this area to date has been conducted at a social-discursive level, which if it formulates the subject at all, tends to see her as an empty vehicle for the power that works through discourses, oftentimes in implicitly uniform ways (see e.g. Daroya, 2013; 2018). Alternatively, intentionality surreptitiously re-enters the frame, so that racialised desires and sexuality, or even as it is sometimes framed “sexual racism”, become a *conscious* thing, and the preserve of those aberrant individuals who it can also be demonstrated are “generically racist” (Callander et al., 2015); all the better to write them off as “bad apples” and cast them out accordingly. In responding to what I see as some of the limitations of this work, here, I privilege the subject’s construction in and through discourses as dynamically mediated by psychic processes and the particularity of subjects’ biographies.

I do not seek to provide definitive answers to the question of *why* desire becomes racialised (even while positing my own formulation that this happens at the level of sexuality), but rather to track some of the psychic and discursive (or hybrid psycho-discursive) processes through which it happens, in the specific context of the narratives relayed to me within these biographical interviews, and while remaining alive to the wider socio-cultural contexts in which the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’ unfolds. One thing that comes through especially strongly for me when I reread these accounts is the extent to which racialised identifications (as tracked here through the participants’

position within discourses) are foundational to the construction of both the self and the desired other.

I reproduce the table of participant demographic information below in order to reorient the reader:

Participant Pseudonym	Case Study #	Age	Ethnicity (as self-described)	Sexuality (as self-described)	Education
Giacomo	1	37	White European	Gay	Post-High School Diploma
Anthony	2	24	White British	Bisexual	University Graduate
Josh	3	24	Black African	Bisexual	University Graduate
Trevor	4	29	Black African-Caribbean	Gay	University Postgraduate

Case Study 1 ~ Giacomo

Diary Entry Synopsis

Giacomo's interview was the first I conducted and consequently I was especially nervous. It was the first occasion I would get to put into practice the BNIM technique I had learned over two days of training I completed in January 2017. The interview took place ten months later, and while I had performed 'dummy runs' with friends, and re-familiarised myself with the theory of the interview methodology, I did not feel confident and competent in applying the methodology. I think it's fair to say that both Giacomo and I were nervous and unsettled by the biographical interview structure itself.

I felt that Giacomo displayed a strong sense of wanting to please me, and he frequently asked for reassurance about his responses. It seemed to me he would have preferred a more typical, semi-structured interview approach, in which the questions were not so open and freeform. It struck me that Giacomo particularly struggled with the lack of guidance in my questions, which were deliberately structured more like prompts. Intuitively, I thought Giacomo might perhaps have lacked confidence that he had anything interesting or important to say about my research topic; a dynamic that seemed to suggest to me that he was participating in my research to find out more about this topic and/or himself from me, "the expert".

Overall, I felt that the BNIM interview structure generated significant anxiety for Giacomo (and again, I reflect on my own role in this as novice biographical interviewer). This, combined with his need to please, made Giacomo's interview difficult at various points. Several times I had to clarify that the aim of the interview was to build a picture of his life experiences, rather than to paint him as an expert on the topics of my research (be it 'race', sexuality, or 'gay life'). Despite this, Giacomo's turned out to be one of the longest interviews.

I felt an ambivalent bundle of emotions and affects in relation to Giacomo. I have profound identificatory investments in the 'bel paese', having had numerous idyllic holidays, close friendships, flatmates, and romantic relationships with Italians who have inculcated me into various aspects of their culture, queer and straight. As a result, I often find myself building rapport easily with the Italians I encounter. An additional resonance was lent by the fact that one of my supervisors, who is Italian, would read my write-up of the interview, and I speculate that I may have had her somewhere in mind during the interview, analysis, and write-up. Overall I found Giacomo very friendly, although his humour was sometimes lost on me, and there was an element on my part of polite and anxious laughter and wanting to please my participant.

In fact, I think Giacomo's use of humour was important, as I felt that he deployed it to build rapport, and this was not something I wanted to discourage. I also identified with his critiques of gay 'clone' culture and the superficiality of much of the commercialized gay scene, as well as the way he framed his own sexuality in terms of an attraction to difference. However, I also found his descriptions of the Black men in his life problematic, since I felt he was mobilising an essentialised understanding of 'race' and racialised sexual subjectivity. I was especially struck in the interview when he framed his erotic desire for Black men in terms of "morbid curiosity" (which in Italian would also mean obsessive and morbidly erotic, recalling the psychic structure of fetish). I also felt there were prominent elements of objectification and instrumentalisation in the way Giacomo described the Black men in his life, from the fuckbuddy who was seeking a deeper relationship - which Giacomo resisted, while continuing to have sex with him - to a Black friend he described quite singularly in terms of "exuding sex" with his "beautiful body and lips".

Giacomo gets lost on the way to our meeting. I have arrived early and set-up the interview room with precision in anticipation of his arrival. Being nervous about conducting my first BNIM-style interview, I become exasperated in the process of trying to track him down. When we meet, my stresses are somewhat allayed, as he's friendly, warm, and open. He begins cracking jokes from the outset, a

comedic sensibility that runs throughout our two interviews. Giacomo is tall and broad shouldered, with olive skin, short, cropped Black hair, and a precision-sculpted beard. He's wearing a Black t-shirt, a denim jacket with sheepskin lining, straight-legged navy trousers, and camel desert boots. During the first interview he is on a period of annual leave from work, and his attire reflects his relaxed and casual demeanour. A White Italian, Giacomo has been living in London for a number of years and works full time in a creative industry. He is currently single, but met his last two partners on Grindr, which he also uses regularly to organise hook-ups and meet "fuckbuddies".

Giacomo talked extensively about his difficulties growing up in a remote part of Italy within a conservative culture that he experienced as oppressive, and this was a dominant topic in his life narrative. He spoke at length about his struggles trying to leave the family home, resisting his mother's solicitations to stay put until he was married. In this analysis I focus in particular on two aspects of his narrative, which came out of his discussions of his racialised sexuality. The first is a discussion of the erotic dynamics of heterogeneity and homogeneity, and the way that for Giacomo, 'race' provided a terrain on which his attraction to difference could play out. Within my own framework, I suggest that we can read this as Giacomo's desire for difference - which crops up repeatedly throughout the interview - becoming rendered *as* sexuality in and through (specifically) 'racial' difference. Giacomo also positioned his attraction to difference as at odds with the prevailing dynamic of desire on the mainstream gay male scene, which is defined in terms of sameness. The second aspect I draw out is the way that through the interview narrative, Giacomo constituted a racialised sense of self from an anxious identification with Whiteness and erotic identifications with men who were more and less White than him, which shored up (in different ways) Giacomo's own White 'racial' identity. Giacomo's narrative testifies to the contemporary endurance of Whiteness as a fluid and contested category, which comes into particular relief through the experiences of a White southern European, who may not always be constructed and apprehended as 'White' in a northern European context. Giacomo's experiences thus prompt us to reflect on the diversity and insecurity of Whiteness and its subordinated categories.

Giacomo discussed two relationships with Black men during the course of the interview. One was a “fuckbuddy”, who Giacomo described having recently advocated for moving their relationship beyond periodic hook-ups. Giacomo was resistant, believing they had little in common aside from their sexual connection, which he described effusively as, “like electricity”. Giacomo had taken to proactively managing and limiting his time with this “fuckbuddy”, while resisting ending the relationship altogether so that their *electric* sex could continue. Given that other people in his narrative were named, it seemed significant that the “fuckbuddy” remained nameless throughout. The second relationship with a Black man detailed by Giacomo was platonic at the time of the interview, although in this case, the roles were reversed and Giacomo was looking to take things to the next level. His erotic desire was palpable as he described the beauty of this particular Black friend - named this time; “T” – in a way that I felt seemed to put great emphasise on his physicality. “T” was “a beautiful guy”, which Giacomo qualified in terms of the fact that he “sweat (sic) sexuality”, and had, “a perfect body... he’s always there training, he has wonderful lips.” While, perhaps, the conspicuous beauty of a gym-honed physique readily lends itself to comment, “T” as conjured within this interview existed almost entirely in terms of his body. Despite speaking in some detail about both “T” and his fuckbuddy, there was a sense in which Giacomo failed to convey either of these men much beyond their physical attributes. Thinking discursively then, both of the relationships with Black men that Giacomo considered sufficiently meaningful to mention in the interview were mediated by a White way of looking that framed Blackness in terms of physicality.

While Giacomo did not elaborate about why he “like(d) Black guys”, sameness and difference came up in Giacomo’s first attempt to address his erotic preferences, which he identified – and named on his Grindr profile – as being for Black *and* blonde and ginger-haired men:

“There are people that they, they are looking for their double, because if you see even in Grindr, or in common life, you see people and they stay

together, and at the end they, they end up looking like each other. You know same style, same beard, they look like hmmm brothers, no? It's, it's a funny thing. And so I think this is quite important, but then we are attracted also erm, from different things. So for example, I like Black guys, this is probably something that I always said like, erm curiosity, but then sort of, I would say, *morboso*, I don't know how you say in English, but something that turns you on. And er, I had the chance here to try and experiment many, and so I don't think I am racist in this sense, but erm if I, if I go to examine a big spectrum of race, for instance in this case, for your research, I, I don't know if I would never lie down with erm, erm Asian, because there's nothing, there's not a turn on. For me. So for erm, for me, as I told you I like bearded types, so erm, for them, they are, and also I'm attracted to older people usually, and so the Asian type is more like a twink, twin, twink? Twin or twink?"

The first thing I note is that compared to other parts of the interview, this was a point at which Giacomo began stumbling over his words, suggesting an increase in anxiety as we broached the topic of his racialised sexuality. This again suggests the high anxiety that circulates around the topic of 'race' for White people frightened of saying the wrong thing and being positioned as racist, a dynamic compounded by the deeply personal and thorny issue of racialised desire/sexuality/'preference'. Thinking about those discourses that constitute and frame the racialisation of sexuality, Giacomo draws on a particular discourse about Asian masculinity, reifying Asian men into a *type* (a rhetorical move observed by Riggs [2013] in his study of White-authored, anti-Asian sentiment on *Gaydar*). This discourse (which could also be construed as the racialised application of an 'emasculatation' discourse to a particular racialised, gendered subject formation) genders Asian men as more effeminate, summed up here in the figure of the 'Twink', a popular trope in gay culture and pornography, which denotes youth, smooth, hairless skin, and may often be synonymous with the 'bottom' position in sex. The 'Twink' is also a racialised figure; certainly the archetypal 'Twink' is White, but if sufficiently slight and smooth, then East Asian men may also be able to access this sexual subject position. Thinking

psychoanalytically, Giacomo's *parapraxic* slide between "twin" and "Twink" is also interesting since it implies a projection of sameness, which we can read as alluding to the homogeneity of gay culture as manifest in the totemic figure of the Twink, or else an implication that for Giacomo, Asian men are all the same. Giacomo also formulates "Black guys" as a type, their diversity flattened out by the fact of 'racial' difference, which appear to become – by his own framing of it – a source of erotic fascination for Giacomo.

After positing that many gay couples look like brothers by virtue of their homogenous styles and appearances (a disidentification framed here in terms of the incest taboo/discourse), Giacomo then introduces an alternative logic, one of heterogeneity and attraction to difference, which he frames in terms of a curiosity that is "morboso". "Morboso", which translates from Italian to English as "morbid" conveys a visceral and irresistible will-to-know. In English the term can imply both a compulsive need for knowledge – and here perhaps it attests to the deep yearnings involved in erotic desire – as well as a preoccupation with figures of violence and death. Given the historical proximity of these latter motifs to the history of Blackness as a 'racial' formation, Giacomo's choice of "morboso" to describe his attraction to Black men took on a double resonance. Within the interview context I found the phrase jarring, and it stayed with me throughout the interview and after. Giacomo repeated this phrase, "morbid curiosity", three times in the course of our first interview, and I suggest this has influenced my reading of his comments about the Black men in his life as at least somewhat objectified, even *fungible*. "Curiosity" and its antonym, security, might be configured as analogous to difference and similitude (respectively), which I have argued elsewhere constitute a primary structure of desire. To what degree then might other identifications with curiosity/security become displaced onto racialised objects, manifesting as desires - rendered *as* sexuality - for racial difference and sameness?

It is also interesting to note in terms of the structure of this response that where the incest taboo is invoked to frame the archetypal gay male structure of desire/sexuality ("they look like hmmm brothers, no?"), it is 'race' that arrives to

save the day. Here Black men provide an erotic terrain on which Giacomo's desire for difference (and aversion to incest) can predicate itself, while at the same time configuring and erotically-charging this sexuality as *outside* or *forbidden*. We can track a number of constellated identifications here. There is a negatively-accented identification with mainstream gay male culture, following the logic of: "*they* are attracted to sameness, and I am not like *them*". There are also more positively-accented identifications with 'racial' and ethnic difference, which as I go on to discuss below, have implications for Giacomo's own racialised sense of self. And I also want to speculate here about the possibility of a negatively-inflected identification with Giacomo's hometown, which becomes manifest in Giacomo's avowed aversion to ethnic sameness. When asked to recount the story of his life, Giacomo devoted a considerable portion of his narrative to evoking the conservatism of the place he came from, the difficulty in first leaving the family home, and then moving further away until he ended up living abroad and asserting his independence more fully. It seemed to me that the oppressive and controlling world he conjured would negatively inflect Giacomo's identification with his hometown, a psychic move that might even be a question of survival for a queer subject attempting to construct a sense of self against the heteronormative grain. If, by virtue of seeing the world through the readily available lens of 'race', this negatively-accented identification comes to be framed in 'racial' or ethnic terms, it may also serve as a foundation on which Giacomo's positively-accented identification with Blackness (as he, a White man, renders it) can be founded. Elsewhere, Giacomo did indeed seem to account for his attraction to ethnic/'racial' difference in terms of an aversion to the love of sameness he encountered growing up in a rural, isolated part of Italy, with its relatively ethnically-homogenous population:

"Living in (remote rural region) and having lots of people, having lots of, I mean we have blonde people too, but having all those people around you that they look all the same, at the end when I moved here I was crazy for ginger, or blonde, because I like differences as I told you. And I don't know, I just do it to joke when an Italian guy chat me, I tell him, "I don't do Italians" (laughs) But then I say, "I'm joking". But it's more because

they're too similar to me, and I don't find it stimulating, and for them I don't have any more the curiosity, I prefer to pass to other things."

Giacomo makes clear the importance of an erotics of difference to his sexuality, one which becomes racialised as he rejects fellow Italians as too much like him, preferring the sense of *O/other* generated by Black men and ginger and blonde men respectively; from the positionality of an Italian man, both are exotic 'ethnic' formations. Here, again, 'race' and ethnicity are performing *the work of* difference, becoming eroticised for Giacomo in the process. The twin examples also demonstrate how nationality and ethnicity might work in a similar way to 'race' to construct normative sexual objects and culturally-policed sexual boundaries as a key technology in the propagation of the nation state (Nagel, 2003).

We might also speculate that erotic identifications with Nordic and Celtic men on one hand, and Black men on the other, might work differentially to secure Giacomo's own White 'racial' identity. Pairing with a White man secures this White identity by increasing Giacomo's proximity to Whiteness, working to validate the idea that he is White *too* (especially in a wider context in which endogamy remains the norm). Proximity to Blackness accentuates Giacomo's Whiteness *by contrast* (while running the contradictory 'risk' that he becomes rendered Black himself, through proximity to Blackness, and/or by virtue of the trope of the 'fallen White woman' who allows herself to be seduced by Black men). Conversely, proximity to another Italian, something Giacomo rejects, would cast the most ambiguous note of all over his 'racial' identity and sense-of-self. As Giacomo goes on to talk about later in the interview, his felt-sense of this White 'racial' identity is one that is ambivalent and anxiety ridden.

Giacomo is clear that this preference for difference puts him at odds with the wider gay community and gay culture, which pivots on a logic of homogeneity:

"With gay culture it's also more difficult because I think there are also other things going on under the gay life, they are all for brawn, and

brawn, so they have to wear 'Addicted' clothes, and in the end they are all the same. Because they are spending all their time on Instagram wanking on Go Go Boys or erm gay porn actors. So at the end they want to be like that, because they have the model in erm in that. So they want to emulate. But if I want to emulate I don't know, Rocco Steele, and the other one too, and the other one too, in the end you have, we are always with this style. That's why it's more accentuated."

"I'm aspiring to have a partner with totally different features from me, errr maybe I would never reach that unless I find some other guy that they're not looking for a double and they like my features. But sometimes I think that it's difficult to get in touch with those people because they probably are looking for something like them. So this can be limiting, but as I told you (laughs) I'm not gonna wear blue contact lenses, I'm not gonna lighten my skin!"

In the first quote Giacomo references a cluster of mainstream gay male identifications: firstly a love of traditionally masculine tropes – in this case "brawn"; then the highly sexualised underwear brand 'Addicted' (jock straps and crotchless wrestling 'onesies', usually sold in sex shops, and only properly intelligible within the context of the gay male *sexual field*); and finally, porn (represented here by prominent actor Rocco Steele). He makes the case that the specificity of mainstream gay culture, which increasingly anchors itself to a particular, commercialised, aesthetics of the erotic, promotes and accentuates the love of sameness. The position he stakes out here again recalls Green's "sexual fields" theory (2008b), particularly Green's argument that as a given "sexual field" becomes more specific, so do its object/s of erotic desire, and that the sexualities of participants in a given "sexual field" come to be inflected by its cultural ideals and attendant aesthetic sensibilities.

For Giacomo, this logic of sameness in gay male culture is so pervasive that it presents him with a significant challenge in finding a partner, on account of his converse attraction to difference. In fact, Giacomo sees the logic of homogeneity

as so saturating gay culture that he conjures the idea of changing his own appearance (wearing blue contact lenses, lightening his skin) to attract the kind of guy he might be interested in – in this case the blondes and gingers, rather than Black men – only to dismiss it. Nonetheless, this is a telling fantasy. The idea of having to change aspects of his physical appearance – wearing blue contact lenses, lightening his skin – in order to be considered the same as the fair-skinned Northern Europeans to whom he is attracted raises complex questions about Whiteness, and implicit here is the idea that Giacomo may not be seen as White on the same terms as these men. I also read these comments in light of the fact that at various points in the interview, Giacomo seemed anxious to establish what British people think about Italians. He described feeling resentful that at work he had been told that he was “judgemental” and “dramatic”, and that this had been framed explicitly in terms of his ethnicity/nationality. The following quotes contain further speculations in this vein:

“How do they (British people) feel and see us (Italians)? Cos probably they feel us and see us, in Italy we say the people they are washing the car, the glass of the car⁶⁶, or just the Polish girls that they are coming. So erm, I think that we all have these kind of clichés, and so I think that sometimes I can be probably fun for some of them, but then you can not go further than that. So, there must be something. I mean I was in a six months relationship with a British guy, he was okay with me, and then it ended.”

“He’s Italian, he works in a coffee shop”. “He does pizza”. “He works in a restaurant”.

In the first quote, Giacomo invokes the spectre of Italian responses to immigrants from Poland, who by virtue of their class position are subjected to particular “clichés”, and I think inherent here is the suggestion that they are different from Italians, and somehow not quite White. Whereas in Italy it is the

⁶⁶ I understood this to be a reference to immigrant workers attempting to make money by offering to wash windcreens at traffic lights.

Italians who 'racially' *other* Polish immigrants; in the UK, Italians can also be *othered*, and in this capacity, Giacomo seems to attribute to British people the power of arbitration over Whiteness (and thus an old hierarchy of Whiteness emerges in which 'Anglo-Saxons' are at the top). This is suggested as he segues directly from his analogy with the Polish immigrant experience into speculating about why a British ex-partner ended their relationship, and whether Giacomo was merely considered fuckable and not ultimately relationship-worthy. There seems to be a double projection occurring here. In the first instance, Giacomo projects the racism of some Italians towards Polish people onto his own situation as an ethnically-differentiated - though still "White" - immigrant in the UK. The segue Giacomo makes between this and the anecdote about his British ex-boyfriend seems to imply - in the absence of a forthcoming explanation from this ex - that the reason Giacomo got dumped was his ethnicity - Italians are good for fun, but not more. It strikes me that this can be read as marking a second projection, one based on Giacomo's earlier anecdote in which he described his Black fuckbuddy as good for sex but not somebody with whom he would pursue a relationship.

The second quote contains some of the stereotypes that Giacomo feels British people may hold in mind about Italians, and which might consequently mediate his own identification with 'racial' Whiteness in the context of his life in London. These stereotypes occupy particular class positions, formulating Italians as a manual worker class - in particular fulfilling low-level service sector roles - thus elucidating the class dimensions of Whiteness; as an essence (and with a great many exceptions) Whiteness is associated with economic success and prosperity. Giacomo's narrative presented his economic background and position as resolutely modest. I would speculate then, about the extent to which the sorts of wealthy, propertied Italians who frequent expensive parts of North West, West, and Central London would be similarly anxious about British perceptions of them. It may also be pertinent here to invoke the regional divide in Italy between the so-called Northern "polentone" ("polenta-eater") and Southern "terrone" (literally of the earth, and denoting an image of rural serfdom and backwardness), while noting that both of these terms are often used as

derogatory epithets. Northern Italians might self-identify as ethnically Whiter, and regionally, they are certainly wealthier, leading to a class identification; conversely, within Italy, Giacomo as a Southerner occupies a position of subordinated Whiteness, which contains both ethnic and class inflections. Thus, as for when Josh (Case Study 3), a Black man, positions his White peers as “like us” by virtue of their economic marginalisation, so Giacomo provides evidence for the ways in which Whiteness is intersected with class, which can render an already-fragile category more vulnerable still.

A further explicatory factor in Giacomo’s anxiety about his own Whiteness came when Giacomo recounted how he had been positioned as not-White on numerous occasions both on- and off-line. He talked about frequently being misrecognised as being of Arab-ethnicity by Arab tourists seeking directions, and then went into a discussion about how his ethnicity on Grindr was sometimes misread:

“And for instance, on Grindr, when I have just a picture of torso like everyone else, I had a picture that I was very tanned, and errr and they, “Are you Indian?”, “Are you Indian?” And you could see only the mouth, the lips, and the body was very tanned. “Are you Indian?” I said, “No, I’m white”.”

The repetition of the hailing statement, “Are you Indian?” three times creates a kind of interrogative frenzy, which I believe may evidence Giacomo’s own anxiety; was this question actually posed three times in the Grindr conversation itself? When directed at Giacomo, the question “Are you Asian?” constitutes both a ‘hailing’ statement in the *Althusserian* sense (1971/2001), and a misrecognition containing many implications: it suggests the fragility of Whiteness and its often frustrated attempts to delineate itself as a discrete category; it betrays the attendant anxiety of subordinated White groups themselves, who occupy a position between more established modes of Whiteness and the denigrated Other (the histories of Italian and Irish Americans also demonstrates how readily such abjected Whites, once allowed into the fold,

could become the most enthusiastic foot-soldiers for White supremacy); and it calls on histories of Orientalism (Said, 1978/2003), in which the populations and cultures of the 'East' have been positioned as variously backward, violent, exotic, and louche. We could add to this list of traits anything else that Whiteness is not, since the Oriental of Occidental discourse has provided that necessary Other that the West needed to define its White self (Said, 1978/2003; Cheng, 2018) (just as, we might add, the hetero needs the homo to define their own 'normativity'). Another way of putting this is that the Whiteness Giacomo claims for himself - as a psychosocial formation that becomes psychically inscribed - is predicated on a negatively-accented identification with the Oriental *Other*, one that is shot through with fear, and thus promptly disavowed. Thus, a misrecognition of the type Giacomo describes may threaten his wider subjective integrity. After Kovel's formulation of psychic racism (1970/1988), we might speculate about whether what we see in this narrative is a psychosocial process of disavowal and projection onto the figure of the Oriental *Other*, which in turn structures Giacomo's identity and sexuality. This is further accented if we consider that Giacomo started our first interview delineating his racialised sexuality explicitly in terms of an inability to imagine himself being attracted to Asian men, and attendant feelings of fear and disgust.

The narrative that comes out of my interview with Giacomo thus tell us much about the lived experience of a particular class of subordinated Whiteness in the context of a multiracial, multicultural city such as London in the second decade of the twenty first century. It also speaks therefore to the racialised histories that continue to be invoked in such a context. At one point in the interview Giacomo referenced the ongoing political saga of *Brexit*, and I speculate about the degree to which this vote and the cultural shifts it provoked might represent a persecutory object that further threatened Giacomo's claims to Whiteness (by British standards). Among its numerous pernicious effects, *Brexit* seemed to draw an imaginary line across the English Channel, reminding White Europeans of the contingency and fragility of their residential (and 'racial'/ethnic) status. To what extent does this White 'racial' anxiety inflect Giacomo's own erotic desires for the Other; from the Nordic/Celtic White other represented in the figure of the

Englishman who breaks off their relationship and won't explain why, to the Black Other represented in the figure of the fuckbuddy he does not want to give up (and cannot contemplate dating)? How much of Giacomo's evident anxiety at being misrecognised as Asian is predicated on his own internalised misgivings about his not-quite-Whiteness? Here sexuality emerges as a key site at which questions about (racialised, gendered) identities, belonging, and recognition are enacted and left hanging like anxious spurs to thought, feeling and action; spurs which, working through 'desire *as* sexuality', both inflect our sense of selves and shape the world around us.

Case Study 2 - Anthony

Diary Entry Synopsis

Although we had never met, I was linked-in with Anthony by a mutual former colleague. Before starting the interview, we spent some time discussing colleagues and acquaintances in common, which worked to build rapport quickly. Perhaps because of this, I felt comfortable enough to challenge Anthony's narrative at various points in the interview, to see if he could resolve some of its inherent tensions. For instance, I prompted him reflect to on how he reconciled describing himself as 'colour-blind' with his highly racialised sexuality.

I found Anthony to be very self-confident, and, ostensibly at least, he had a high opinion of his own desirability on the gay scene. I found his honesty and frankness refreshing, and his candidness made for a very interesting interview. My own affective response to Anthony, both within the interview, and in the process of writing up this case study, is an ambivalent one. I identified, for instance, with Anthony's taking pleasure in engaging with Black cultures. At times though, it struck me that a defensive self-righteousness and dogma precluded Anthony from effectively engaging with 'race' and his racialised sexuality. Although I distinguish my own sexuality from Anthony's, I was able to empathise with his anxieties about his attraction to Black men, which may in turn have influenced my reading of his narrative. The defensive affect that I suggest circulated around some of Anthony's responses may have been accentuated by debates about 'racial preference', which reduce it to a matter of racism or 'fetishisation' (especially as it manifested for Anthony, as a White man who described being exclusively attracted to Black men). Examples of where I found Anthony's reasoning (personally) problematic included an occasion when he sought to defend himself against accusations of racism (from those problematizing the racialisation of desire/sexuality) by emphasizing his own minority status and suffering as a gay man, and another when he attempted to push the burden of discussions of 'racial preference' back onto Black men who seek out White partners (who he positioned, despite abundant evidence to the contrary, as getting off 'scot-free').

In prompting Anthony to consider the conflicts in his narratives and accounts of himself, I felt somewhat conflicted, since by training I have consistently been encouraged to check the inherent power of the researcher's role; however, in this interview, I sought to use it carefully, and I hope productively, to prompt further thought, rather than leaving conflicting loose ends.

Anthony arrives at our meeting point in Russell Square after a busy day at work. He's wearing a shirt, tie, and suit trousers, and is fair-skinned, with a tall, robust frame, and long, thick brown hair down to his shoulders. I initially presume we're a similar age, although it transpires there is almost a decade between us. Anthony is in a relationship with a Black man, originally from a majority Black country, who has lived in the UK for most of his life. They met on *Jackd*, a rival app to Grindr, and Anthony had met previous partners through both apps.

My reading of Anthony's interview is structured around a persistent theme: his erotic desire for, and relationship with, Black men and Black culture, something that was defined throughout the interview by a pronounced need to defend his sexuality in the face of discourses that positioned him as racist and/or aberrant. I believe this defensive dynamic might be important in thinking about Anthony's motivation to give up time on an otherwise busy day in order to participate in this project. I felt Anthony had a persecutory sense of what *people* have to say about a White man who links and dates (exclusively) Black men, and that this fuelled both the desire to have his say (and take this opportunity to defend himself), and a hope, perhaps, that my own research would contribute towards generating explicatory frameworks that he could draw on to better understand, communicate and defend his racialised sexuality.

Throughout the interview Anthony's defensive position becomes manifest in long pauses, gulps, and a rambling pace of speech that was often hard to follow in the moment (and subsequently difficult to transcribe). At one point Anthony told me, "I'm speechless, I'm never speechless", a statement that conveyed both a sense of confidence in himself as a person who usually knows what they think

and how to articulate it, and his unease within this specific interview context. Another prominent theme throughout the interview was how his erotic desire for Black men, and more abstractly *Blackness* (as it acquired meaning and resonance for him), mediated Anthony's own White 'racial' identifications and sense of self. I believe Anthony's interview elucidates a number of important and interesting themes about racialised sexualities. One is the importance of racialised identifications (in this case cross- or trans- racial identifications) for the construction of both self and desired other and the way a sexuality may have emerged to bridge 'the gap' between the two; a second is the ambivalence and complexities of cross-'racial' identifications and erotic desire; the potential foundation they provide for "racial literacy" (Windance-Twine, 2010) - predicated on the *empathic* qualities of such identifications - combined with the limits of this "racial literacy", which limns the degree to which 'transracial' intimacies may involve the ambivalent negotiation of 'race' as an obstacle and perma-feature of everyday life (Lewis, 2009a; Winddance Twine, 2010).

More quickly than any of the other participants, Anthony's response to the opening biographical question steered things specifically toward the *racialisation* of his sexuality, perhaps reflecting his awareness of my research agenda and suggesting that he had arrived with a clear agenda. He was unequivocal about the fact that he is only attracted to Black men. His first attempt to explain this framed it as something deeply-felt and personal:

"It's just something close to me. Errrrm, I see it as what I'm attracted to. And so there are white guys, no offence, they're cute, they're pretty, but they're not what I (pause) want in a partner. I think when it comes to sex and pure like the animalistic side of things, it's just, it's just a physical attraction. I can see the beauty, and I can see the aesthetic, and I can see what people find attractive in other ethnicities – like Asian, errr Latin, mixed raced, White – but to me it's just not what I'm after, it's just not what, what I'm drawn to."

Here Anthony conveys that while he can objectively see beauty in many racialised guises, it is only Black men that act as magnet for his erotic desires – attracting him and drawing him in. This positions these desires discursively as something both innate and experienced as somewhat passive, as though Anthony is mere vehicle or vector for them; in this way we might also say that it is Black men who are configured as the ones *doing* here, and who therefore bear the responsibility for being *so sexy* in the first place (reproducing at the same time the dynamic by which the racial Other brings ‘race’ on themselves, as a way for the White mind to disavow its originary implications and investments in racism). These pulls towards Blackness are also framed as “something close to me”, “physical” and “animalistic” conveying a visceral sense of the feelings evoked by erotic desire. It also unwittingly echoes the positioning of his objects of desire (*as* sexuality) – Black men – as the not-quite-human, on account, not least, of their animalistic sexuality (Hill-Collins, 2006).

The seemingly simple statement “it’s just a physical attraction” is also pregnant with meaning when applied to racialised sexuality. It is akin to the “just a preference” discourse, which serves to rhetorically shut down further interrogation of sexuality by appealing to a privatised formulation, girded by a politics of tolerance and respect, which has become synonymous with the term “sexual preference”, as applied in the context of gay and lesbian rights. “Physical” can also be read as a metonym for ‘innate’, biological, or genetic; the latter, as Stuart Hall notes, “cannot be seen, but has the power to fix and stabilise racial difference” (1996: 21). When deployed in the way Anthony demonstrates here, “physical” – that is, innate/biological/genetic – preference might also have the effect, by a process of sliding signification, of rendering ‘race’ as something natural too. Hall also helps us to think about why sexuality generated through a White gaze trained on Black bodies can never be simply a matter of physical attraction; as he tells us, “The so-called bodily insignia – Black skin, thick lips, curly hair, penises ‘as big as cathedrals... are not only constituted through and through in fantasy, but are really signifying in the discourse of racism” (1996: 21). As much as we might want to, we cannot go back to a world before White

racism, in which the physical features of Blackness (to the White gaze) would not carry with them the signifying weight of our racist histories.

Despite initially invoking physical attraction, Anthony goes on to elaborate that his relationship with Blackness goes far beyond this. For instance, Anthony was at pains to communicate that he lives in a social world populated with Black people:

“You can go through my phone, my Whatsapp, and every person’s picture’s Black, Black, white, white, Black, Black, it just, it’s just what I’ve been, I’ve not even gone on a mission to find this, or become this. Like Rachel Zoe⁶⁷, “I’m now Black” - “You’re white!” - you know that woman from America? “I’m Black!”

Here, Anthony seems to want to convey that the majority of his relationships are with Black people, and that this is not the result of some intentional master plan, but something that just came to be. He also locates his proximity to Blackness in childhood:

“I’ve always grown up around Black people, therefore I’m not saying I’m not a white person, I’m clearly white and I know that I’m white, but because I was around it, I’ve been exposed to it more, so therefore it probably was an, an upbringing thing. I, it’s hard to put my finger on it, but I just think it’s, I, it’s, it’s just something I’ve always been interested in.”

In the last sentence of this quote, it’s interesting to note Anthony’s oscillation between subject and object positions, as “I” continually gives way to “it’s”. The sense is that Anthony is about to embark on a subjective statement or interrogation – that is, of his *own* sexuality - but in the event he objectifies them and casts them out into the realm of worldly objects; “It is what it is”, not “I am what I am”. As a defensive move the former abdicates any sense of responsibility

⁶⁷ It soon transpires in the course of the interview that Anthony means Rachel Dolezal here.

that may attach itself here. We see evidence for some of the ambivalence and anxiety provoked by Anthony's racialised sexuality, as he flits between a posture of asserting them unapologetically and one of defending them nervously; lest, I wonder, he inadvertently *outs* himself as racist. This latter posture belies the positioning of all racialised sexuality as inherently problematic, if not racist, and predicates itself on the individualised formulation of racism as contained in one-off "bad apples" (rather than working from the imbrication of all subjects in the structures of our White supremacist societies). More generally, and reading Anthony's defensive posture sympathetically as a fellow queer person (and with much of my own sexuality oriented to Black men, which I nonetheless distinguish from Anthony's in numerous respects), I would also point out the extent to which many queers experience feelings of profound responsibility for our historically pathologised erotic desires, and that any discussion of racialised sexuality in this context is likely to have echoes of these earlier battles.

In this excerpt Anthony also begins to position his desire (*as* sexuality) for Blackness as something that has been an enduring constant in his life. This desire to give his sexuality a history may be about conveying that it is not a passing fad, which I think in turn belies the wider societal obligation to construct sexuality as something fixed and permanent in order for it to be valid. Reading the preceding two quotes together, I am struck by the double reference to 'transracialism' in the figure of Rachel Dolezal – who openly identifies as 'transracial' by her own definition – and Anthony's self-conscious protestation that "I'm not saying I'm not a white person", as though somebody has suggested otherwise. I think what Anthony is invoking here, in the spectacularized figure of Dolezal, are his cross-'racial' identifications. Anthony's positioning of himself in contradistinction with the maligned figure of Dolezal can also be read as a defensive move, in so far as he is anticipating and rejecting the core of the critiques levelled against her; namely, that she was a White person colonising Blackness. By invoking the figure of Dolezal while simultaneously staking his claim to his cross-'racial' identifications, Anthony conveys the anxiety that orbits them. This also speaks to the difficulty of discussing cross-'racial' identifications, when the dominant narratives that tend to be built around them are pathology, transgression, fetish

and appropriation. We lack a positive vocabulary and discourse for relating across 'racial' boundaries – especially when it relates to what hooks calls, "loving blackness" (1992) – rendering any attempt to construct one, as Anthony is trying to do throughout this interview, especially fraught.

Elsewhere in the interview, Anthony elucidates his erotic desire for Blackness in more detail:

"I think it's a cultural thing. There's a lot of aspects of Black culture, and it's not just one culture, it is obviously diverse, and I've always been very interested and very attracted in a purely platonic sense to Black culture – so the music, food, erm art, whatever, I've always been very interested by what people deem to be Black culture. Erm, so for me it just somehow, maybe it manifests in that way, maybe because I like it from a platonic sense, it's just developed. And therefore I think if I'm dating someone then I have access to that culture (pause) more regularly than you would find it with a white person."

Here Anthony frames his attraction in terms of identifications with 'Black' culture, which he understands as diverse and heterogeneous and present in cultural objects such as music and food. He directly links these ostensibly more "platonic" investments with his racialised sexuality. While this is framed in terms of dating a Black person providing "access" to Black cultures, I believe the implication that music, food and romantic partners provide multiple points for racialised identifications is also being made. That these racialised objects of identification are all things that can be taken-in in some way – after the model of psychic internalisation that girds identifications and object relations – is also notable. Following my formulation of racialised desires *as* sexuality in Chapter 3, whether these objects are taken in after the model provided by food – as an *incorporation* – or rather via introjection, would then exert a significant influence on the qualities of the resulting identifications. Thus we might think of these different points of Black culture alongside Black men as providing a cluster of racialised identifications, which become introjected, imbricated and accumulated

as psychic objects. It is interesting to note the work that Anthony does to distance himself from the eroticised components of his racialised sexuality with the (untenable) distinction between 'platonic' and physical attraction. The platonic objects of Black culture to which Anthony refers – food, music, art – all concern the senses – taste, hearing, sight – and thus represent both physical sensations and rich grounds for desire and its eroticisation through sexuality. I also wondered if this attempt to retreat from sexuality to a less-eroticised terrain of identification with Black men and Black cultures was not also informed by the looming figure of the hyper-sexualised Black man, and the unspoken implication that it is this – and can only be this – to which Anthony feels himself drawn.

The focus on Black cultural objects again recalls bell hooks' argument that part of the allure of 'racial' difference is the implicit promise of unknown and profounder pleasures than can be encountered within one's own 'racial' group (1992: 24). Inherent in the appeal of eating the other then is both the eroticisation of racial difference and the appeal of border crossings, of transgressing the socially salient boundaries of 'race'. The emphasis on eating and consuming the Other suggests a particular power dynamic; as hook elegantly formulates it: "To eat Black food is a way to say "death, I am eating you" and thereby conquering fear and acknowledging power. White racism, imperialism, and sexist domination prevail by courageous consumption. It is by eating the Other that one asserts power and privilege" (1992: 36). Anthony's consumption of Black culture cannot therefore be rendered as innocently as he hopes, since it proceeds under the weight of a White supremacist racism that has always consumed the products and cultures of the 'races' it subordinated, entirely on its terms. That is, eating the Other is part of the structure of racism itself (a fact which simultaneously re-limns the difficulty of establishing a discourse for cross-'racial' identifications and attachments). We are thus also prompted to contemplate the power dynamics that may structure identifications. This becomes particularly acute in another part of Anthony's interview in which he revisits his attachment to Black culture, and especially food:

“At the point where with my current partner when said he couldn’t cook me *name of majority Black country* food, I was like, “What do you mean you can’t cook me *name of majority Black country* food? I, I want some *name of majority Black country* food. (laughs) Learn!” So, it’s, a always, so where I work (...) has a very big Black African support group, that I don’t work on directly, but if I’m there on a night that group is running, I’m with the people, I’m talking, I’m engaging, having conversations, and we’re having jokes and arguments, like we’re having a discussion. I would actually just like leave my own role and go and chat to these people for half an hour because I’m so interested.”

While the process of literally eating the Other’s food suggests a position of mastery over it – and in psychoanalytic terms cannot help but recall that avaricious form of identification predicated on incorporation - this is extended by Anthony to his relationship with his Black partner, who he renders *not Black enough* by virtue of his being unable to cook *majority Black country* food, framed here in terms of Anthony’s disappointment. This is then followed by an order, a precise point at which Anthony “asserts power and privilege”: “Learn!”. It is interesting to note also at this point the emanation of a (nervous?) laugh; a point in the interview at which I felt particularly uncomfortable. From this culinary anecdote Anthony then segues immediately into a story about wanting to abandon his work post to join a group of Black co-workers from which he is ostensibly excluded on the grounds of his Whiteness. This seems to echo precisely hooks’ implication that the Other is always having more fun, and I wondered if the segue from his boyfriend’s inability to cook *majority Black country* food to the Black African support group had anything to do with the ‘spread’ of food that might be accompanying the latter. Read in light of Anthony’s earlier anxious invocation of Rachel Dolezal and ‘transracialism’, I believe the quotes above can also be read in terms of the *to have/to be* fulcrum on which identification (and by extension desire and /’as sexuality’ pivots); by *having* Black male partners, Anthony is afforded (at the level of more and less conscious phantasy/fantasy) the opportunity *to be* Black; as such his sense of disappointment in his partner’s inability to cook *majority Black country* food

(racialised here as 'Black' food) can be seen as an accusation that he is not Black enough. In turn this would dilute Anthony's own claims, and access to, Blackness.

As a counter to these more challenging readings of Anthony's enjoyment in Black culture, I also want to draw on Winddance-Twine's (2010) formulation of "ethnic capital", which – building on Bourdieu – she defines as, "a variant of cultural capital that is highly valued by members of racial and ethnic minorities [...] a form of currency, a resource rather than a liability, employed by members of ethnic minority communities to secure their belonging, while also reinforcing their cultural ties in the face of racism" (2010: 8). Beyond acting as a resource against the toxicity of racism, objects imbued with ethnic capital also create spaces that are not reducible to racism and are good in and of-themselves, a fact which renders them precious; and their appropriation an understandable cause for concern. I want to extend this definition to think through the ways ethnic capital can be a source of attraction and an object of desire (and/as sexuality) for those constituted as the ethnic majority. What may be valuable to Black people themselves, both the cultural resources located within the community, and the sense of community created by such resources, may also generate cross-'racial' identifications such as those identified by Anthony. Resistance to these identifications may be predicated on the fear that they can easily give way to claims of mastery and appropriation, or that they are fair-weather identifications, that will be taken up and abandoned when the going gets tough or the (White) subject's priorities change (an anxiety that may also have accented Anthony's earlier insistence that his own sexuality was not a passing fancy). Nonetheless, such identifications are laid down constantly, and with evermore gusto in multi-'racial', multicultural contexts. For Anthony, his racialised identifications with Blackness have produced object cathexes; that is, he is psychically invested in his racialised objects, and these investments come to undergird his own subjectivity, identity, and his desires as rendered in and through sexuality. This being so, he may feel quite profoundly that he cannot make sense of himself without these identifications with Blackness; a fact which mediates rather than obviates the need to grapple with the complexities of cross-'racial' identifications and 'transracial' intimacy.

Anthony draws on an implicit formulation of identification himself when he talks about how his experiences in Black relationships have shaped his perceptions of racism and allowed him to see the world through non-White eyes:

“Dating people who are say of an ethnic minority, I think it, it, it helps, because, because you’re with that person, you speak to that person, their friends, their family, you are again more exposed to potential issues, be it Blackness, anti-Blackness, racism or whatever, because you’re more exposed to it, you’re more attuned to it, you have more of a, not a say, but you have more of an opinion, cos you’re exposed to it from both sides, so like, i.e., me as a white person and the privilege that I have versus my boyfriend or my partner as a Black person, and the lack of privilege he might have. And I see it from both sides, I see his experience, and then I see my experience, so you can compare and see the, see the two. Does that make sense?”

Here Anthony uses a term associated with “wokeness” - “privilege” - to convey an elevated racial consciousness and an ability to consider the way that different racial positions facilitate particular (racialised) ways of seeing and experiencing the world. “Wokeness” is usually attributed to Erykah Badu (2008) and has been adopted to denote elevated consciousness and awareness, particularly concerning the social justice causes associated with ‘race’, gender, sexuality, ableism and other dimensions of difference and associated marginalisations. Privilege is an associated concept, which is broadly synonymous with the philosophical concept of “perspectivism”, or “standpoint theory” (Hill-Collins, 1997); that is, how the subject’s ability to perceive the world comes to be structured by the subject positions they inhabit. When Anthony discusses his “privilege”, I take him to mean specifically his perspective as a White person, which precludes him from seeing or experiencing all the ways that society is structured to promote his interests and subordinate those of other ‘racial’ groups. His implication here is then that by identification with his Black partner, Anthony can see the world through his eyes, which throws into relief his own

White privilege. This struck me as a formulation of Winddance Twine's theory of "racial literacy" (2010, and discussed in the literature review), which suggests that the empathy to which identifications can give rise can be productive of new, racialised ways of seeing the world.

In her own work with the White mothers of Black children (2010), Winddance Twine found highly variable degrees of 'racial' literacy, and much of the rest of Anthony's interview implies that his own 'racial' literacy is very much still a work in progress; testifying to the challenges and complexities of maintaining forms of 'transracial' intimacy. This also speaks to what Lewis (2009) elucidates through her own lived experience as the constitutive ambivalence of such 'transracial' intimacies; an ambivalence that I would argue we struggle to acknowledge under a regime in which love and hate, racism and anti-racism are formulated as discrete rather than overlapping investments. Arguably, Anthony also elucidates the potential for Whiteness to deceive itself regarding its acquisition of "wokeness", and as terms like "woke" and "privilege" enter the vernacular, it becomes ever-easier for them to be reeled off as platitudes, eliding rather than highlighting the necessity for White racial reflexivity. As scholars of 'race', I would suggest that we can expect to encounter them as increasingly common features of everyday speech; claims to "wokeness" or references to "privilege", might even mark a new, more sophisticated form of the "I'm not racist but..." disclaimers identified by Billig (1988), by which racism is simultaneously denounced, denied, and sustained. One question that remains for researchers of 'race' is whether this "woke" agenda indicates a society that is really becoming more tolerant of difference, or one that knows how to pay lip service to the ideal.

In discussing the increasingly prominent debates about 'racial preference' in LGBTQ+ and mainstream media, Anthony conveyed some of the difficulties of maintaining 'racial' literacy and consciousness of his 'racial' privilege as he attempted to field what he saw as defamatory critiques of White men who are exclusively interested in Black men:

“Overall I think people will try to say that it’s racist (preferring Black men), some people will try to say that it’s discriminatory, sometimes people say that you’re overtly sexualizing a certain race, cos of certain stereotypes, to me that’s not actually what I’m about, to me it’s just what I’m purely attracted to, and you can’t help it, some people like ice cream, some people don’t, some people like the colour red, some people don’t, it’s just personal preference.”

“They’ll try to say that you only want a particular type of ethnicity and race because of what it stereotypically it (sic) appeals to you. But I always say that, one, preference is preference; you wouldn’t say that you’re being sexist if you don’t want to date a woman. It’s just you know what you’re attracted to. You wouldn’t be ageist if you don’t want to date an older man or a woman or younger man or woman, it’s just what you’re attracted to. And I always say well okay let’s flip it round, there’s a lot of Black guys I know who only date white guys, is that also racist, I’ve been told, well it’s not, and it’s why is it not? And it’s oh well you can’t be racist to a white person, and I’m like well that’s bollocks, sorry that’s crap”

In both quotes, Anthony’s defensiveness regarding his racialised sexuality shines through. There is the frequent repetition of “just” designed to shrink the matter down to size, to make it trivial and unworthy of further interrogation. The anonymous hordes conveyed by the pronoun “they”, and these unidentified “people” who want to critique and position Anthony as a racist also hints at a persecutory fantasy (by which I don’t mean to suggest that they don’t also exist in fact!), while suggesting that Anthony has brought these persecutory objects into the interview room. In the first quote, Anthony makes reference to a particular criticism of ‘racial preference’, which argues that to be singularly attracted to a particular minority ethnicity implies “overtly sexualising” this group, a criticism especially pertinent in this case as Black people have historically been hyper-sexualised by the White colonial gaze. He then anxiously rejects the applicability of this critique to his own case by invoking the rhetorical defence of ‘preference’, which is then framed in terms of analogies with food and

colour. These glib culinary and aesthetic comparisons suggest at least two possibilities: that Anthony has the 'racial' literacy to know that 'race' contains erotic components but wishes to shut down thinking about this by invoking "personal preference"; and/or, lacking 'racial' literacy, he truly doesn't see any difference between liking ice cream and the colour red, and being attracted to Black men. With respect to both readings, I want to propose that Anthony constructs an example, in-action, of the deployment of the 'preference' discourse as a rhetorical and epistemological strategy for closing down thought; in this case, thoughts (and feelings) concerning the racialisation of Anthony's sexuality. Given that this racialised sexuality is a White man's 'preference' for Black men, this closing-down of thought could also be positioned as defending Anthony from all of the other uncomfortable thoughts that may otherwise intrude: of mastery, colonisation and exerting power over the Other.

The second quote again shuts down avenues of thought by invoking preference – "preference is preference" – while providing further grounds for questioning the extent of Anthony's 'racial' literacy. He makes false equivalences between 'race' and gender, and age, suggesting a limited sense of the particularities of these categories, although there is certainly something – as I think I demonstrate repeatedly throughout this project – about gender receiving a 'free pass' in matters of sexuality, while 'race' is either interrogated or denied completely. Anthony then launches into a defensive manoeuvre that seems designed to put the onus for self-justification back on Black people who are attracted to White men, a group he apparently believes get off scot-free. In fact, if he *was* well-versed in Black cultures, Anthony would know that this is unequivocally *not* the case, and that debates about 'interracial' relationships – and in particular, Black men who partner with White women – are very prominent in both the UK and the United States. I don't think I'm being unfair to say that it's surprising that Anthony has never come across these debates, and yet, by his own description, so much of his intimate and social life is spent in proximity to Black people and cultures (it also makes the case – if it needed making – that proximity [even of the most intimate kind] to other 'races' is not sufficient to generate 'racial' literacy). Another limit to Anthony's 'racial' literacy was demonstrated by his

invocation of a 'colour-blind' discourse. The first way this "colour-blind" discourse (Bonilla-Silva, 2002/2010) came up was when Anthony told me he didn't see 'race' – specifically Blackness – before launching into an analogy about not seeing disability either:

"Like I don't stare at a disabled person walking down the street, I don't see a Black person".

Perhaps unconsciously, this analogy is particularly telling, as not staring at a disabled person is not a matter of not seeing the disability, but a function of a cultivated politeness that is meant to make the disabled person feel less uncomfortable and exposed, as well as conveying an awareness and acceptance of the fact that people are different. Given that Anthony told me he was only – and had only ever been – attracted to Black men, I wanted to push him on this particular point, as I did at a later part of the interview:

Interviewer (I): Yes, I noticed something you said though, in relation to – maybe trying to tease out a little bit the tension between - you kind of said that you don't really see 'race'

Anthony (A): Ahem.

I: But then you're only attracted to Black guys

A: Yes, that's (pause)

I: So (pause)

A: That's strange yeah

I: Can you think about that maybe?

A: No, no that's really strange yeah, I've never, I've never thought about it like that. Errrm. It's interesting. I've never actually thought about it in that sense. And I've, I must see something, because I must see what I'm attracted to. And therefore it must come into play somewhere. But I don't think it's necessarily a conscious thing. Does that make sense? So, yeah subconsciously I know what I'm going for and I go for that, but consciously I'm not seeing these things. Which goes back to my point before about it just being a preference, it's not predetermined, or preset, but it's something that's, that's always inside of you. So if someone tells you that they always knew they were gay, or bisexual or pansexual or whatever, they always *knew* there was something about them, "Oh I always knew I was trans, cos I just felt like I wasn't in the right body for me. You don't know why, it's just sort of always been there. So even though I don't necessarily see racism, or see race or any other social grouping, because I (pause) there must be something in me, but it's probably not my conscious. It's buried deep in a, like an onion, the layers buried deep, you don't always see, it always just, it's probably just there. Yeah?

Here, Anthony introduces a somewhat psychoanalytic formulation of the psyche as multi-layered and ultimately unknowable. By sequestering away 'preference' in the realm of the unconscious, Anthony also makes a rhetorical move that serves a specific psychic function, rendering 'preference' something that cannot be thought about. Here then, 'preference' is again rendered as a pat explanation that provides grounds for shutting down thought. The Freudian in me also wants to point out the *parapraxis* wherein Anthony says he doesn't "see racism" before correcting this to "race". This Freudian slip of "racism" may be read a number of ways: Anthony wants to 'confess' that he really doesn't see racism, or at least some part of him is concerned that he does not; alternatively, we may read it as a product of the anxiety that circulates throughout this interview, manifest in the idea that Anthony might *really* be 'a racist', which becomes so acute that he blurts out the accusation himself. A final trace of unconscious activity can be read in the broader contradiction that structures Anthony's narrative as he sought to

maintain incommensurable positions of both seeing and not seeing 'race'. This kind of narrative contradiction can be framed as an unconsciously-anchored defence that facilitates what is more commonly called 'cognitive dissonance'. In this case, I would suggest this need for 'cognitive dissonance' can again be related back to the anxiety that circulates around the subject position of the White person discussing 'race' (especially when this occurs in the context enacted by Anthony in his interview of defending against charges of racism for being a White man attracted to Black men).

I also want to suggest that the anxiety and defensiveness present in Anthony's psychically strategic use of 'preference', was present in his decision not to include his attraction to Black men on his Grindr profile:

"But I then didn't want to put on my profile, "Only for Black guys", cos I've seen people who put (it) on their profile, and then after it ends up adding, "Don't hate me!" "It's not racist!" and "It's just my preference". And I thought, "Why should I have to sit there and justify, or get abuse or get attacked by people who think I'm being a certain way when I'm not?""

"It's a barrage of abuse I wasn't prepared to deal with"

Perhaps understandably, and despite the expedience it might have afforded, Anthony avoids discussing his 'preference' on his Grindr and online dating profiles, in order to avoid conflict and an obligation to provide self-justifications that he sees as inevitable. These quotes also position Anthony as the victim of others' misunderstandings and misapprehensions, and point to the anxiety that I believe saturates his narratives about his preference for Black men throughout the interview. Interestingly, this rationale also centres Anthony's own experience, rather than considering the effects that the statements of 'racial preference' can have on MSM of colour using apps, who are simultaneously excluded and desired *in terms of* their 'race'.

Nuancing the picture somewhat and ending on a note of complexity, I also want to suggest that there was an occasion where Anthony seemed to be able to access something beyond his own White experience, and that this might have relied on a cross-‘racial’ identification, and the “racial literacy” to which it gave rise:

“There’s a difference between someone overtly sexualising you a certain way because they think you’re a certain thing, so they think because you’re Black you’re going to be dominant, rough, a top. Therefore I’m coming for you because you’re Black. No, no, that’s one thing. Me, being attracted to Black guys because that’s what I’m really attracted to is separate from that, I think. But I get that some people who’ve had the experience of sexualisation because of their ethnicity, might find it hard to differentiate those two things, because why are you different to this person over here? So.”

While this quote potentially introduces a false dichotomy between attractions predicated on stereotypes and being “really attracted” to Blackness, Anthony also begins to try and see things through the eyes of that racialised Other, the one who has been sexualised according to stereotypes numerous times (and is tired of the kind of White men who open Grindr conversations with lines like, “I really like Black guys”). Anthony acknowledges that it would be difficult to discern desires for a stereotypically “dominant”, “rough”, Black “top”, from a more general desire for Black men, although his setting up of a dichotomy between the two suggests he wants to shut down any consideration of how they might be imbricated. As such, even wanting to nuance the picture, I was again left with an impression of Anthony as somebody who was anxious and conflicted about his racialised sexuality and at considerable pains not to engage with it. In this sense, Anthony’s decision to participate in this research could be configured as something of a contradiction. I certainly think there was some conflict between the different investments or outcomes Anthony sought through his participation. It seemed to me that he wanted to have his say, and was curious about the insights we might generate together, while simultaneously fearing exposure. As a result I think he was left unable to come to a satisfactory

accommodation with his racialised sexuality (and identity) that would allow him to acknowledge the complexities without having to revert immediately to his defences. What appeared to be a relatively low-level of racial literacy combined with a somewhat-misplaced sense that he was in fact very 'racially' conscious and 'woke' may contribute to his conflict at the epistemological level. Psychically it seemed he might be deploying the 'preference' discourse – locating it as something that was innate and located within the unconscious (or “subconscious” in Anthony’s own language) - as a means of defending against further conscious thought. Thus I think this interview and Anthony’s decision to participate in this research project can be framed as a function of the conflict between a conscious sense that the matter of his racialised sexual preference is settled – variously positioned as fixed, physical, innate and innocent – and a deeper sense of psychic unease that this is not really the case.

Case Study 3 – Josh

Diary Entry Synopsis

My recollection of Josh's interview is framed by a comment he made (once the recorder had been switched off) to the effect that he was surprised about how candid he'd been regarding various intimate aspects of his life. In an analogy that was quite disturbing for me personally, Josh commented that he could see how the police catch people out, because once the questions started rolling he felt he lost control of his responses. This underlines the incredible privilege and power of the researcher's role in accessing deeply personal, and sometimes painful, life narratives; a dynamic doubly accented by this project's focus on racialised sexuality (a topic that is personal, intimate, and potentially injurious). I had a positive affective response to Josh and felt like we got on, which may also reflect the fact that – like Anthony - he was recruited through my extended network. This might also have influenced the candid tone of his responses, as he possibly felt more comfortable than he would have done with another researcher – especially another White one. As it is, his contextual knowledge about the project and me allowed him to place both, including my potential motivations for doing this research. Further, his 'preference' for White men may have made it easier to discuss his erotic desires with a White researcher, rather than a Black one. One thing I felt quite strongly during this interview was that Josh seemed at pains to distance himself from feelings of pain circulating around his experiences of his sexuality as a child and teenager. He contradicted himself by saying he had escaped the turmoil that is often prominent in gay men's narratives of their childhoods, before describing scenes of his own conflict and distress. Thinking psychoanalytically, this contradiction might be read as evidence of a psychic defence that keeps something potentially traumatic at bay. Combined with his comment explicitly analogising our research encounter with a police interview, this prompted me to consider the power dynamic inherent in the process of researching human subjects; it seemed almost that Josh had been seduced into an interrogation of himself – bringing to the surface some quite painful and potentially traumatic material – through the 'thinking space' the interview generated, and the questions I posed. In turn, this

underlined the importance of investing time and energy into thinking seriously about the ethics of research with live participants.

Josh arrives for our interview after a long day at work. He is dressed with sartorial flair in *sports luxe* attire; an unorthodox uniform, but permissible for a freelancer. We have met several times before through friends, but this is the first time we are meeting one-on-one. Working from the foundation of these shared connections allows us to build rapport quickly. Josh is tall, lean but broad-shouldered, and at the risk of sounding smitten, unequivocally handsome. He grew up in London and describes himself as of Black African-descent. His parents separated when Josh was young, and he's lived predominantly with his mother. Josh identifies as bisexual, which is not a label he feels much invested in as an identity but serves to describe his attractions to both men and women. He has discussed his sexuality with his mother but maintains many friend and family relationships in which he presents as straight. He is currently single but met his last (and first long-term) partner via Grindr, a White man from North America.

Regarding the racialisation of his sexuality, there were three dominant narratives that emerged in the course of Josh's interview. The first was the importance of 'race' and a developing 'racial' consciousness to Josh's own identity and his sexuality. This developing 'racial' consciousness and associated politics did not necessarily fit linearly with Josh's exclusive (same-sex) desire for White men, elucidating the complexity of that especially-thorny nexus of politics and sexuality, and the latter's resistance to educative injunctions. The second theme was the intersection of 'race' and gender, and the way these categories provided overlapping polarities of sameness and difference which Josh constituted as two discrete, racialised and gendered objects of his bisexuality: White men and Black women. The final prominent theme was Josh's experience of growing up with a profound sense of "difference", for which the racialised category "gay" was the most readily available heuristic, and which presented Josh with a series of dilemmas as he attempted to hold onto sometimes seemingly contradictory identifications and investments.

Josh's narrative about 'race' was one in which it was – *consciously* at least - a relatively abstract factor in his life until he went to university, where he encountered for the first time a predominantly White environment, which threw his own Blackness into a sharp, disorienting contrast. There he encountered numerous instances of racist injury. These included overt racist name calling, being stopped by the police without due cause (marking the first appearance of this recurring authority figure within the interview), White people crossing the road to avoid him, and university house parties where Josh described whole rooms going quiet as soon as he and his Black friends entered the room. Josh had grown up in a multicultural, multi-racial part of London, and the schools he attended had been highly diverse. He described his experience of 'race' before and after attending university in a predominantly White town, which came to mark a sort of yardstick for Josh's 'racial' consciousness:

“Race hadn't been an issue before, not at all, before that (going to university), I almost feel kind of ashamed, because before that, maybe I was living in kind of a bubble, because before that even in London all my friends were Black. I grew up in (place name removed – a 'superdiverse' working class part of the city). Everyone was Black or Asian, everyone. And even the white kids, they all come from lower class, so like, they're one of us! Do you know what I mean? I was never called a Black cunt, like never! You know people talking like about like prejudice because of like this or that, I'd heard of it, I'd read about it and I'm passionate about civil rights, but me experience it, I had never been through it.”

This section of the interview was striking, not least for its reference to an especially aggressive racist slur, offered as an illustration of the kinds of violence that prompted Josh's racial awakening. The quote also suggests a fluid formulation of 'race' that is intersected with class (and gender in the appearance of “cunt”), such that Josh's White schoolmates can be considered pretty much Black by virtue of their economically marginalized position, which is denoted in this case by the fact of being from an area of outer London associated with economic deprivation. However, it's interesting to note that while he may have

been less conscious of 'race' before attending university, elsewhere in his interview Josh indicates that 'race' was a present and structuring factor in his experiences of the world:

"Although I surrounded myself with all my Black friends, I was always only attracted to like the white guys in school. That was the only kind of sexual attraction I ever looked at, had no feelings whatsoever, ever, for like, like, my own race, cos I always looked at them as like, "that's my brother"... even if I could sit there and say this guy is super handsome and super hot, he could be stood there naked, and it wouldn't do nothing for me, that's just never, you know. Even if I didn't know the dude, it's like that's my brother, I don't know why, I still feel like that, I don't know..."

While he denied he was racially conscious at school and did not distinguish between his Black, Asian and White schoolmates by virtue of their being from similar backgrounds, Josh describes an indicative awareness of his own Blackness, which mediates his interactions with other Black men ("my brothers"), while professing an enduring, exclusive attraction to White men. We might then speculate that 'race' did structure Josh's experience of the world – and how could it not, as a Black man growing up in the UK – but that the ways he experienced this were not so conscious until he entered the upper/middle-class milieu of university in a less 'racially' diverse city. I'm also struck here by the resonance of Josh's invocation of the incest taboo in relation to (racial) sameness, as it echoes the same analogy made by Giacomo in his rendering of gay clone couples in case study 1. The inference here might be that Josh's racialised identification with Blackness and other Black men cannot become accented in terms of the desire *to have*, which is disavowed, and disciplines his sexuality into an orientation towards White men. This dynamic and Josh's invocation of the incest taboo does not extend to Black women, who are Josh's preferred 'racial' group amongst women:

“I don’t discriminate, and I’ve been with all races, but ultimately, what I’m attracted to, I’ve come to understand about myself, of what catches my eye on a day-to-day, is like yeah, Black girls and white guys”.

Thus, the dynamics at play here are: ‘racial’ difference + gender sameness (White men) = erotically desirable; ‘racial’ sameness + gender difference (Black women) = erotically desirable; ‘racial’ sameness + gender sameness (Black men) = not erotically desirable; ‘racial’ difference + gender difference (White women) = not erotically desirable and entirely absent (White women were not mentioned at any point throughout the interview). Thinking about the erotics of difference/similitude as they play out through the intersections and accents of racialised, gendered identifications, one way of constructing Josh’s sexual orientation towards White men and Black women (and *not* White women or Black men) is that in the former case ‘racial’ difference tops gender sameness, and in the latter gender difference tops ‘racial’ sameness; such that an erotics of difference is nonetheless a constant. Another reading might be that sexual non-normativity (same-sexuality) becomes rendered (for Josh) in terms of ‘racial’ non-normativity (attraction to White men).

That Josh prefaces this construction of his racialised sexuality with a disclaimer - “I don’t discriminate” - functions rhetorically to position him as ‘not racist’, while hinting at the anxiety generated when discussing the racialisation of his sexuality, as it is typically rendered in terms of individual responsibility. I argue that this occurs as a function of the dominance of discourses that locate both sexuality and racism at the individual level, rather than thinking through the ways that both phenomena draw on the socio-cultural resources in circulation and available to the subject at any one time. This process of ‘individualising’ – readily giving way to pathologising – was historically also the case for the gendered dimensions of sexuality; homosexuality was *the fault of* homosexuals. The anxiety of the disclaimer is then carried through two iterations of erotic desire, concluding with a rendering as, “What catches my eye”; suggesting a kind of passive construction where it is less a matter of what I am looking for, than what hooks me in. Like Anthony’s formulations of erotic desire in case study two,

this speaks to the ways that erotic desire is experienced phenomenologically (and how I render it theoretically), as something over which we have little conscious control; thus it is Black women and White men who perform a sort of seduction of the senses and catch Josh's eye. This defensive strategy might also be necessary to explain the disjuncture between Josh's sense of himself as a 'racially' conscious, proud Black man and as a Black man whose same-sexuality is exclusively oriented to White men. Finally, this is further inflected in the present case by Josh's positioning within certain formulations of Black nationalist discourse as always-already a 'betrayal' by virtue of his same-sex attractions, which would be rendered there in terms of an "it's a white thing... dismissal of queerness" (Muñoz, 1999: 9).

Beyond Josh's own explanation, I want to use material he introduced elsewhere in the interview to think through some possible explanations for how Josh's same-sex attractions become racialised as exclusively White. Josh discussed his difficulties of working through a particular kind of Black masculinity that he felt was held up as a standard by which he should seek to measure himself. The purported failure to achieve this performance of racialised masculinity initially earned Josh the nickname "David Beckham" at his secondary school, invoking the spectre of the prominent White football player who was synonymous at the time – the 90s – with the recently coined term "metrosexual":

"Where I grew up all my friends were Black and we all, we just were like going through the notions as we was growing up where it was like we had to show stereotypical notions of masculinity, where it's like we all have to fight all day and that. And it's like sure, I'm down to do that, but then, when we've finished doing that, I might like, you know, everyone's playing football all day, I might just be chillin'. Or even sometimes like the way I spoke, because when I first came from my primary school, which was like, it wasn't predominantly white, but when I first went to secondary school I remember they used to call me David Beckham, they used to say like my voice sounded like him and I used to hate that shit! So

even like that, I used to stand out in different ways and so I always used to have to try and prove myself.”

Black masculinity is introduced as a value against which Josh will have to measure up, and he is haunted by the spectre of comparisons with an effete White masculinity represented by the figure of David Beckham, who was softly spoken with blonde highlights in his hair, and was famously photographed on holiday in a sarong. The difficulties of Black men in assuming masculinity in a White supremacist society are mediated by gender as an always-already racialised, and more importantly, anti-Black, formation (e.g. Hill-Collins, 2006; Weheliye, 2014), and compounded by Black men’s historical, political, and economic marginalisation, all of which inflect the paradoxical (given the prohibitions on assuming masculinity outlined above) but nonetheless enduring figure of the “hypermasculine” Black man. In the scenes depicted by Josh, this “hypermasculine” Black male figure continues to haunt the playground antics of his Black male friends as they grow up in 21st century London. Blackness and Black masculinity were also invoked in Josh’s descriptions of difficulties he experienced in thinking about his same-sex attractions:

“I went through hard times with my sexuality in terms of dealing with, more so dealing with other Black people, and like, just having to fight like growing up and trying to show masculinity in other ways, but also dealing with that, that simultaneously deal with that in my head, and also hearing my mum and best friends and my brother so commonly talking about gay people and gay things as disgusting, and I’m like what the fuck am I thinking? Why can’t I turn these thoughts off you know? So I went through that kind of shit.”

In this quote “other Black people” and then specifically Josh’s own family become the repository for sexual normativity and specific expectations about sexual behaviour, including overt homophobia and heterosexism. This is not though to suggest that standards of Black masculinity are unique in suppressing forms of

gender and sexual dissent⁶⁸. Heterosexism in Black communities may also be compounded by the racial inscription of gayness - the predominant contemporary identity vehicle for same-*sexuality* - as a specifically White category. As discussed in chapter 1, multiple scholars of sexuality have commented on the ways that 'gay' as an identity and a community is predominantly formulated and represented as White (on gay men see Beam [Ed.], 1986; Mercer & Julien, 1988; Riggs, 1989; Hemphill [Ed.], 19991; Scott, 1992, 2010; Berubé, 2001; Walcott, 2003, 2006; Barnard, 2004; Riggs, 2018. On the lesbian community see Lorde, 2017; Brandt [Ed], 1999; Goldsby, 1990).

Josh's White male: Black female binary may also provide evidence for B. Ruby Rich's suggestion that in same-sex couplings, "race occupies the place vacated by gender" (1993: 321), re-introducing a dynamic of heterogeneity or complementarity. As Hall (1992) notes, 'race' is a 'sliding signifier'; one consequence of this is that its meanings are not fixed, but fluid, locked into chains of signification such that 'race' can come to signify other things – in this case gender, with which it is of course always-already inflected – and be signified by other things in turn (a symbolic process that is mirrored and undergirded psychically by the process of displacement and the transfer of investments between psychic objects). In this case, 'race' comes to stand metonymically for the difference that is usually denoted by gender; that is, it does 'the work' that gender would otherwise perform to maintain an erotics of difference. Again, this becomes an especially effective move, as 'race' and gender are always-already intersected. In the case of Josh's erotic desires for Black women, the erotics of difference is already established by sexual and gender difference, and thus 'race' is not called upon to do this work.

Beyond these social significations, I also wish to speculate that for Josh as a bisexual Black man, the racialised, gendered binary of Josh's sexuality as a narrative of self performs some useful psychic functions. On one reading, Josh's sexual organisation may be enacting a defensive splitting, facilitating a sort of

⁶⁸ In point of fact I can identify with all of the experiences Josh mentions despite my own totems of masculinity being White ones.

segregation that allows for him as a bisexual Black man in a multiracial society to sustain multiple identity positions and behaviours, oscillating between these without having to psychically integrate them; a position we can also formulate psychosocially as buttressed by the paranoid-schizoid organisation of sexuality at the social level. Thus in essence if his 'homosexuality' is 'White', while his 'heterosexuality' is 'Black', his 'racial' and sexual identities may be allowed to remain intact. In maintaining two broadly discrete formations of sexuality, Josh is able to find his place with his family and friends, who require him to perform a particular kind of racialised masculinity, for which the ideal object is a person of the opposite gender and the same 'race'; conversely when he ventures into social spaces outside of this racialised milieu – primarily in his case Grindr – Josh can pursue other forms of masculinity and take as his object another man of a different 'race' (who also happens to be the quintessential gay male subject/object of desire). In so doing Josh displays considerable dynamism in juggling competing demands and erotic desires. Obviously Josh's choice of White partners as a structuring feature of his same-sexuality does not negate his own Blackness, but it does avoid him being confronted with the Blackness of the other in the context of sexual non-normativity; thus it is interesting to note Josh's discussion of what sexual acts he considered permissible with each gender, keeping in mind that his female partners are described as Black:

"Personally, I can't judge another man, there's no woman on this earth, no matter how engaged in the situation I am, who is going anywhere near my arse! (Laughs) You know! That's just me personally. However if I'm around a man, things may go different the same situation, that's just me, I can't judge, there's no woman that's licking my arse, or putting her finger up my arse! No way! I would just feel emasculated! And I'm not saying like, again, maybe that makes me sound like a hypocrite, cos I'm looking at stereotypical notions of masculinity, but like for me personally, nah that's not happening, sorry, nah that's just not happening, no way."

Since anal pleasure is rendered as emasculating here, there is no possibility that it can be incorporated into Josh's relations with Black women, where he must

preserve his sense of his own masculinity. However, he entertains the possibility of the same acts unfolding with White men. Thus, could it be that perhaps these Black women are positioned as guardians or representatives of Blackness and the Black community, and, crucially, of Black masculinity, rendering it unthinkable that Josh expose to them this ostensibly emasculated aspect of his sexuality. This positioning of Black women is further accentuated by their prominent stereotyping as ‘ball-breakers’; as more aggressive than the normative femininity performed by White women. Recalling Scott’s “erection-castration complex” (2014), which he argues defines representations of Black masculinity, we may also speculate about the degree to which an always-already castrated Black male subject cannot risk being re-castrated by an act of anal penetration where the audience (and the co-protagonist) is a Black woman. It is interesting then to ponder that this act can, at least, be contemplated with a White man, a dynamic which symbolically reinscribes scenes of historical trauma (a fact which after [Scott, 2010] I do not in any way advance as a monolithically-historicised⁶⁹ reading of sexuality, nor as a form of moral judgement), but which belongs to a clearly delineated space of White gay sexuality; such that what happens there, stays there.

The establishment of clear binaries of race, gender, and sexual acts works to construct two discrete sexualities, allowing Josh to incorporate them all in the course of living his life, without ever integrating them. I want to speculate that this might allow Josh to identify with two racialised communities, the Black (implicitly heterosexual, *if not heteronormative*) community, and the gay (implicitly White) community. Crucially, neither his erotic desire for Black women nor his desire for White men can be read in isolation without occluding the multiplicity of Josh’s identifications; nor does his sexuality function as an index of his political and identity commitments as an avowed, proud Black man.

⁶⁹ By which I mean to convey something about the scope for creativity at the level of individual subject’s responses to history. While we can never ‘escape’ history - and are in fact constituted ‘in’ and ‘out of’ it - we can also never presume that history as social inheritance exhausts the meanings of racialised sexuality for the individual (psychosocial) subject.

Josh's narrative is defined by tension and contradiction as he attempts to perform across his concurrent identifications and investments in Black masculinity and queer sexuality, which retrograde elements on both sides attempt to position as incommensurable. Josh thus exemplifies many of the dilemmas of an MSM of colour, and in his case, a defensively-constructed⁷⁰ sexuality seems to contribute towards an effective resilience in the face of sometimes-conflicting demands. This resilience seems to bestow Josh with the ability to nimbly negotiate different worlds simultaneously. Nonetheless, I felt that his conflicting narrative concerning the degree to which he had suffered - and the psychic or social price he had paid - for his same-sexuality also suggested that this resilience was predicated to some degree maintaining an unexamined contradiction between his having suffered/not suffered for his *non-normativity*. Although effective, this contradiction speaks to the psychic and social toll placed on MSM of colour to resolve the legacies of history and the paranoid-schizoid organisation of social identity.

⁷⁰ I think it's worth flagging here the fact that I would posit all sexualities are constructed in this way- as 'defensive' formations.

Case Study 4 – Trevor

Diary Entry Synopsis

I came out of the interview with Trevor feeling ambivalent. I could relate to many of the anxieties he identified in feeling pressured to live up to a masculine ideal, especially as it played out in group-sports at school. However, I was also conscious that Trevor's experience sounded distinct from mine in the degree to which other male figures in his immediate family pushed what he described as a "hypermasculine" agenda. In addition, Trevor was negotiating societal racism, from which his family might provide some protective factor, but his early feelings of estrangement may have reduced their capacity to do so. I related to his attraction to difference, but found his emphasis on enjoying conflict and his pleasure in negotiating widely divergent opinions quite odd, more specifically because these divergences seemed to be founded in racism and ignorance on the part of his White partners. He seemed to be suggesting that he enjoyed having to educate them about the realities of racism, although this did not seem to have cultivated much (if any) 'racial' consciousness or literacy on their part. His current partner sounded unequivocally racist, and I had a strong emotional reaction of anger towards Trevor's recitations of this man's racist opinions. I also felt sadness that for Trevor, this was the space he had found for himself in which he felt most comfortable. It seemed to me he was struggling to reconcile his 'racial' and sexual identities, such that he appeared to be fleeing from his own Blackness, towards a Whiteness that he associated – stereotypically - with economic prosperity, an hierarchical 'civilisation' discourse, and a more tolerant attitude toward sexual and gender non-conformity. As a White researcher interviewing, analysing and writing about a Black man, I also locate my conflict here in the potential wider resonances of my readings of Trevor's sexuality and subjectivity as he conveyed them to me; amongst others, that I may be insinuating that Trevor is a 'bad' Black person, or 'not Black enough', when such a manoeuvre would only perpetuate essentialism and amount to racism from my positionality. However, in staying with the anxiety that this dynamic provokes, I think this case study can demonstrate wider points about Black and gay intersectional identities, and how our bodies and the social

categories of identity to which we subscribe cannot be read in any linear way as representative of our psychic and social investments (Lewis, 2007).

Trevor arrived for our interview in smart work attire; tall, slim, and looking younger than his 29 years. He has a managerial job and recently completed a Masters degree. Trevor is in a long-term relationship with a White man who is a decade older than him, and who he met on Grindr. He currently lives with the family of a close friend. Trevor's demeanour is immediately warm and friendly, translating into an interview in which he is candid about often-painful life experiences. Before we begin our interview he talks a little about his current work stresses, and we discuss the neighbourhood in which, it transpires, we both live.

Trevor's interview speaks to the challenges of a doubly⁷¹ marginalised subject – the figure of the Black gay man – negotiating complex racialised, gendered, and sexual identifications concurrently. The orientation of Trevor's sexuality toward White gay men can be read (at least partially) as a function of negative experiences in Black communities both straight and queer, which mediates his identification with a White gay male community. This latter relationship is defined by erotic desire coupled with intellectual and affective ambivalence. As he launches into his response to my opening biographical question, I sense that Trevor has thought about and framed his life with this kind of thematic sweep before; strong themes emerge concerning his identities across dimensions of masculinity and 'race', and the associated struggle to individuate and separate from his family, in the course of finding his place in the world.

In Trevor's response to the SQUIN, what strikes me reading back the transcript is that the term "hypermasculinity" appears almost immediately. These were Trevor's opening comments:

⁷¹ In my concluding discussion, I suggest that the Black MSM subject may in fact be triply alienated.

“Yes so I’m from an Afro-Caribbean background, descent, and grew up in a big family, erm, a couple of brothers and sisters, cousins, kind of were in my life at the time, and erm, growing up in such an Afro-Caribbean community, there’s, there’s a need for a male child to project hypermasculinity, so to speak. Erm, you need to be strong, you need to not show your emotions, you need to take care of your women, you need to take care of your kids, erm, that sort of thing. But growing up, erm (pause) it was obvious that I was quite different... on one hand I knew there was some different about me, but on the other hand, I knew okay we’re growing up in this community so-to-speak, this is what I’m being told I need to be. So obviously when I grew up to an age where I was kind of coming into my own, erm, erm, sex and dating took its toll on me in the sense that, again that two-fold thing was working against me where, my community was saying I needed to be one thing, but I felt another.”

It was striking to me both at the time and retrospectively that hypermasculinity emerged so early on in the narrative. This phrase, suggesting a masculinity that is more profound and intense - perhaps also more performative - than normal, then reappears frequently throughout Trevor’s narrative. As well as its particular resonances for Trevor as a site of identifications and investments, its preponderance throughout the interview arguably reflects the ready *availability* of “hypermasculinity” as a discourse to explain Black masculinity. This availability belies the ahistoricism of contemporary discourses of Black masculinity; completely eliding wider racist histories of the emasculation of Black men (hooks, 1992; Hartman, 1997; Spillers, 2003; Hill-Collins, 2006; Weheilye, 2014). Significantly, Trevor locates hypermasculinity specifically within his own family and the wider African-Caribbean community, rather than in society at large. In ‘racial’ terms this hypermasculinity may thus be rendered a function of Blackness, despite the prevalence of masculinist ideologies – and attendant misogyny, sexism and heteronormativity – in the (White) British mainstream. One evident consequence of locating this (for Trevor) unachievable hypermasculine ideal within the African-Caribbean community is that it then colours any identification that Trevor may be able to make with it; “my

community was saying I needed to be one thing, but I felt another". We might then say that Trevor's gender identifications negatively inflect other identifications with the Black community and his family, all of which represent profound psychic investments and object cathexes for Trevor.

Trevor conveyed an early sense of estrangement from both the African-Caribbean community and his family. The figures of family and community were configured as in cahoots on the question of masculinity in Trevor's depiction of his childhood; two primary racialised objects setting standards he felt unable to fulfil. Since Trevor's community and family, as Black, are racialised in the context of a White society, we might speculate that Trevor psychically internalised them as such. Given the ambivalences of Trevor's relationships with his family, and as I think becomes clear throughout the interview, with Black 'racial' identity more generally, we might speculate that this internalisation was an incorporation (in psychoanalysis the earliest form of internalisation, suggesting that this how families almost-always become internalised by the subject). Once incorporated, the vicissitudes of fantasy can render them persecutory objects. This observation struck me as I pondered Trevor's evocative descriptions of familial and Black community life, often experienced by him as *traumatic*, combined with his later attraction to White men as the only viable romantic partners.

When later in the interview I asked Trevor for an example of when he'd come up against hypermasculinity, he shared a story that involved both his family and the wider community, describing a scene that unfolded at a school sports day when he was about nine years old. Trevor had initially escaped having to play football with other boys, but then one of the players was taken-off injured:

I was told that I needed to replace him, and I honestly said I really didn't want to do it, it's not my thing, don't force me to do it. And I remember the teacher forcing me to do it. But also saying I didn't want to do it, I almost started crying in fact, and in fact I remember my dad walking up to me, pulling my ear and saying, "You better get on that court!" And, it, it's kind of, maybe not quite the same situation, but it's kind of like being in a girl

band or boy band, and then all of a sudden you go solo, and it's just you alone, and the whole spotlight's on you, that is how I literally felt, and I can still remember my heart beating fast, I remember me sweating, and thinking what is going on here. And I think when I think about it, that's one of the first situations that I've been in that I thought I really didn't wanna be that person but someone was trying to force me to be that person. I erm, I pretty, I pretty much know that I am a man to all intents and purposes, but (pause) I didn't want to exhibit my masculinity the way the coach or my Dad was trying to make me do it at that age and at that time. Yep. (Pause)."

What Trevor depicts is a highly traumatic experience, a 'hailing' towards a particular type of socially-sanctioned masculinity manifest in the act of playing football, which recalls Althusser's concept of "interpellation" (1971/2001). In this instance the interpellation is refused by Trevor, producing a kind of fight or flight response in which the world seems to stop momentarily and everybody is staring at him under the remorseless glare of a spotlight. I'm reminded again here of that quote from Muñoz' *Disidentifications*: "One possible working definition of queer that we might consider is this: queers are people who have failed to turn around to the "Hey, you there!" interpellating call of heteronormativity" (1999: 33). Given the early stages at which many of these refusals unfold for queer subjects, they might not be best framed in terms of intentionality (which can come later), but rather - as may be the case with Trevor - as emanating from a position of horror and fear, often accompanied by that famously queerest of affects, shame (Halperin & Traub, 2010; Johnson, 2015).

Retelling this experience also prompts an ambivalent rumination on Trevor's current relationship with masculinity; initially, he seems unsure and still insecure about it - "I am a man to all intents and purposes" - but then concludes with a more nuanced view, which allows for the fact that masculinity can take multiple forms. Trevor's concluding statement, "I didn't want to exhibit *my masculinity* the way the coach or my Dad was trying to make me do it", both locates Trevor on the terrain of manhood, and claims ownership of it, suggesting

the freedom to construct his own ideal of masculinity and to live by it. In so doing it seemed to me that Trevor felt he had to forfeit aspects of his 'racial' and community identities (and their predicate identifications). Later in the interview, Trevor discussed the way that masculinity continues to mediate his interactions with his family, talking about the experience of being around the family dinner table with his brothers:

"I will be a (sic) the dinner table and it's like [Trevor speaking as his brother] "taking care, I'm taking care of my wife, I'm taking care of my kids". And it's like being thrown in my face. And obviously it happens in other communities, but I think when culture and religion comes into it, it, it just projects it, it magnifies it a lot more, being from the Afro Caribbean community that I am, it just projects a lot more because (pause) whereas other cultures might have you know crossed that threshold of you know acceptance and you know allowing people to live their life, Afro Caribbean communities are still, they're still trying to cross that religion threshold, and once they cross the religion threshold there's the culture threshold. And when the culture threshold comes there's also the kind of, "Oh, you are who you are but don't less (sic) Aunty such and such know, don't let Uncle such and such know"

Trevor's pain and discomfort in the scene he depicts are evident, and his interpretation of his brothers' behaviour must be taken seriously. However, I also want to suggest that his response can be read as highly defended, linked to his sense of his own 'failure' to fulfil the (hyper-)masculine ideal promoted by his parents, family, and community, and which then becomes conflated with his brothers' success. Thus his brothers' boasts about providing materially for their family are rendered a direct affront to Trevor. Another potential counter-interpretation for Trevor's brothers' behaviour, namely that children – including adults – often enjoy showing off to their parents and winning approval, escapes consideration. Instead, to Trevor, this is all being "thrown in my face". The challenges all men face in fulfilling the socially-prescribed requirements of masculinity are also profoundly racialised in the case of Black men, and this

short anecdote can be read resonantly in these terms. As Black men have historically been emasculated through political and economic marginalisation, the feat of being able to provide for a family takes on a particular resonance, and thus what appear to Trevor as targeted boasts and verbal missiles – amplified by the vicissitudes of sibling rivalry – might instead be configured as his brothers’ recuperation of agency and power in the context of a racist, anti-Black society, which locks Black men into the erection-castration paradox (Scott, 2014). The historical emasculation of Black men also frames Trevor’s experience of what he calls “hyper-masculinity”, raising the stakes both for him and his family, and amplifying the sense in which by rejecting this model of manliness, he has failed. In this context, investing his identification with his Black family and community with negative affect might be a question of survival for Trevor, allowing him to recuperate his masculinity and agency, and to mediate the abjection that comes from refusing to be “hailed”.

From the above excerpt, we might also suggest that Trevor’s negatively-inflected identification with Blackness pivots on a parallel identification with Whiteness, as Whiteness comes to be configured as progressive salvation for Black ‘backwardness’. This is manifest when Trevor conveys a White, Whigish view of Black culture (predicated on a discourse of White progress and European modernity) by framing it in terms of a need to “cross a threshold”, as other cultures have done, moving past religion towards ‘Enlightenment’. In Trevor’s rendering, the obstacles to Black ‘redemption’ are many, as once religion has been surpassed, there will still be the matter of “culture”, and then family (“don’t less (sic) Aunty such and such know, don’t let Uncle such and such know”). The conflation of these three terms – religion, culture, family – is significant in suggesting a cluster of identifications that become simultaneously racialised (as Black) and configured as backward with the discourse of White progress. This conflation/clustering may be crucial to Trevor’s negatively-inflected identification with Blackness as an object-in-itself, which, combined with an idealisation of Whiteness and White objects, come to structure his sexuality around a paranoid-schizoid split (again, this split is reflected, refracted, and buttressed by the social organisation of sexuality in a paranoid-schizoid schema).

In fact, while some religions certainly remain cesspools of homophobia and heterosexism, the tarring of the wider Black community with the homophobia/heterosexism brush is problematic for a number of reasons. It also takes up those discourses delineated in chapter 1; what Cheng calls “gay Orientalism” (2018) and Puar terms “homonationalism” (2007), which can in turn be read as contemporary iterations of the same narrative of White progress/European modernity. These discourses project homophobia and heterosexism onto racialised O/others, both within the domestic nation state and globally, who become the repositories for social/sexual backwardness and the resulting opprobrium of the White and Enlightened. Furthermore, the implication that other cultures have somehow moved beyond homophobia and heterosexism fails to grapple with a range of legacies including occidental epistemologies of sexuality, colonialism (Thomas, 2007), and the relationships between religion, community and (‘racial’) trauma.

Beyond religion though, Trevor sees his family’s preoccupation with masculinity reflected in his interactions with other Black MSM, a group with which he described encountering multiple difficulties and criticisms of his own gender presentation, being told about his sexuality that he was, “too out there with it”, and leaving him feeling “regulated”. As depicted by Trevor, these scenes demonstrate the condensation of a certain constellation of gendered and racialised identifications, which, like Josh’s case but in quite different ways, also demonstrates some of the challenges of Black MSM negotiating ‘race’, gender and sexuality concurrently. This constellation generates the following dynamic interplay of identifications: Trevor’s friends’ manifestly negative identification with a White gay identity - from which they were always-already excluded anyway - might be intersected/object-clustered by a negative gender identification with the effeminacy of high camp chiefly associated with the White gay male subject (a dynamic for which I also suggested there was evidence across profiles of Black Grindr users as analysed in the preceding chapter [and again, without wanting to elide the existence of the Black and effeminate]). In addition to the relationship of Black MSM to gay/queer identities and

communities, Black MSM are of course not exempted from the wider emasculation of Black men, and in fact their emasculation becomes doubly inflected by the positioning of queers as not 'real' men. In this context, Trevor's being "too out there" might be read as being both "too feminine" and "too White". In this context, Trevor's friends may well deem that *camp* is a luxury only White gay men can afford. This again echoes the dynamic in Josh's narrative whereby an always-already castrated subject feels they cannot afford a further castration. For Trevor, rejecting the traditional models of Black masculinity associated with the demands of his family and wider community, this double bind of queer Black masculinity might achieve some resolution through a negatively-mediated identification with Blackness and a simultaneous embrace of his partners' Whiteness.

Trevor also invoked these difficulties with other Black men directly when I asked him about his romantic preference for White men. He rendered his racialised sexuality in terms of a kind of 'before and after' moment, a 'racial' watershed:

"I have, I have thought about it, and the way I've thought about it is, what, what changed? That's the way I think about it, what changed. What all of a sudden made me feel like all of a sudden in order to have a sense of a normal relationship it had to be with a White man and no one else. Erm, it could be, it's my reason has been it's probably because of my first initial experiences, with men. It's been, it's been a mixture of things, it's been Black men who are not as out there as I am, and it's almost like I feel like I'm being brought back into a hole that I worked so hard to come out of. Erm, it's been White men who probably objectified me if erm in a certain way, and I felt like that was attractive enough for me to be with them. It's been, sorry to be blunt, I'm horny and you're there, whoever you are, if you're giving it to me, let's go for it."

In framing his new-found orientation towards White men, I want to pick up three aspects of Trevor's account here. The first is the positioning of Black gay men as "in the closet" – or in this case, a hole – into which Trevor refuses to return. He is

thus left with few points of identification amongst other Black MSM who can provide a model for Trevor's more open, disinhibited gayness (at the level of culture the picture is far more ambiguous, with plenty of flamboyant Black male icons in the queer cannon; although this then opens onto questions of why such figures have so often been marginalised rather than celebrated and centred). This hole – immediately darkness, and *black* holes are brought to mind – might also be rendered metaphorically as Blackness *itself* in the context of this excerpt. The discourse of the closet is also, as Marlon Ross has argued (2005), a racialised one. Ross identifies the appeal of the figurative closet for gay culture in its narrative of transformation; from the dark into the light, from ignorance and deprivation to community and psychosexual fulfilment; and we might even say in the present case, from Blackness to Whiteness. What gets lost in this discourse are the differential stakes of both the closet and LGBTQ+ communities for particular racialised subjects. Instead an idealised binary of 'in:out' constructs full disclosure of sexuality (for queers only) as a benchmark of psychic maturity and fulfilment. This is especially pertinent if we recall Trevor's earlier invocation of the White progress/'Whig' history discourse to frame homophobia and heterosexism in the Black church/community/family.

Also striking here is that Trevor invokes fetishisation of Black men by White men, and then positions this "objectification" as desirable. Certainly, if our sexual and romantic relationships are, as some psychoanalysts have it, about seeking recognition on the terms of our own subjectivity, then fetishisation achieves this, rendering Black men desirable, albeit on terms set by a dominant White gaze. This brings us to an especially uncomfortable aspect of the racialisation of 'desire as sexuality', which is the pleasure that can be derived from fulfilling stereotypes. As Rinaldo Walcott puts it in laudably frank terms, "the scopic pleasures of... being constituted as the Negro in Fanon's famous scene might be and can be – and often is – lived out as a very pleasurable thing" (2003: 141). While this insight might be thought about productively in terms of a Foucauldian formulation of the way power works through sexuality (a sexual subjection is productive of pleasure), it also reinforces the argument advanced in Josh's case study that sexuality cannot be mapped neatly over a subject's politics or ethical

commitments. This is not to say that sexuality should be de-sutured entirely from political and ethical questions, but rather that any relationship is nuanced, complex, and requires a formulation of the psyche and the subject that can handle contradiction.

At the social-discursive level we certainly still need to grapple with the fact that power works in and through ‘desire *as* sexuality’, discourses, and subjectivity, putting the subject in thrall to history; to a discourse which precedes its own existence (Butler, 1993), and over which it can have little control (interesting though to think about the ways disidentification as formulated by Muñoz [1999] can restore elements of agency). Drawing as it does on historical discourses of Black masculinity and ‘race’, it is worth noting specifically here the extent to which a prominent feature of the ‘racial’ life of mainstream gay culture and especially porn is the positioning of Black gay men as exotic objects expected to perform particular racialised, gendered scripts. As discussed in chapter 1, whether such representations provide points of identification for Black MSM is contested. Barnard (2004) argues that in the case of ‘interracial’ porn especially, they do not, but Walcott’s argument above testifies to the fact that the reality is more complex.

Finally, in parsing Trevor’s narrative construction of his sexuality, I want to pick up on what he identifies as the effect of repetition; in his words, the “horny and you’re there” factor. The ubiquity and prominence of White men on the gay scene in London – as on Grindr – generates multiple opportunities for ‘interracial’ encounters. What might then start as a matter of expedience may become a “path well trodden” (to use Sara Ahmed’s phrase, 2006) and thus an orientation in itself. Trevor described his racialised sexuality in the following terms:

“I would have sex with anyone. But if, my ideal relationship would have to be (with) a White man.”

The use of “if” here, qualifying what follows, suggests that Trevor is making a choice under some sort of coercion; whether this is mine as the researcher

(although I never directly asked him) or emanating from some aspect of the social realm or its psychic avatars in Trevor's inner object world, is not quite clear. Nonetheless it suggests an element of provisionality to what follows, which then segues into a much more emphatic formulation ("would have to be"). This "would have to be" is trained on Whiteness, alongside a hint of its idealisation – present here literally, in the word "ideal" – which Trevor delineates at greater length elsewhere in the interview:

"So, in terms of standards of living, most case scenarios a lot of the White men I've been involved with have had a better standard of living than I have. They're culturally different. They're politically different. They are you know aesthetically different, and erm, what I was able to see was, I was able to see a difference, and the commonalities. So we might have a difference of opinion, you might be conservative, I might be Labour, but we can have a conversation about it. And then once that conversation ends we can kiss and hang out as well. That sort of a thing. And it wasn't in a, I mean coming back to the hypermasculinity thing, it wasn't an argument that cups were thrown, or you're banging on the table, it was civil, it was okay that's what you think, this is what I think."

Here, Whiteness is associated with 'superior' or 'elite' things, including material wealth, higher standards of living, greater tolerance of gender non-conformity, and the peaceful resolution of conflict (in lieu of the implicitly 'Black' cup throwing and table banging depicted by Trevor earlier). As Whiteness is so idealised and Blackness so *denigrated* in this rendition, I am prompted to consider whether Trevor's racialised identifications manifest through psychosocial processes of projection, which in turn come to structure and organise his sexuality as the particular racialised formation he presents in the interview. In this way, Trevor would split off and project good things onto Whiteness, while the bad is split off, reserved for, and projected onto, Blackness; mirroring the historic structure of White racism (Kovel, 1970/1988). Through such projections, and their associated psychic investments, Trevor would

continue to identify with both Whiteness and Blackness, but they contain different, alternately valued/denigrated contents.

In this discussion of his 'preference' for White men, Trevor repeatedly emphasises their difference. For example, Trevor makes an equation between Whiteness and right-wing politics, which though not without a basis in fact, also serves here to exaggerate the difference of 'race' (while also suggesting a superficial/flat and thereby more readily idealised conception of Whiteness). It's also interesting to note the degree to which this sits in tension with his earlier formulation of Whiteness as progressive, and perhaps speaks to the ways in which Whiteness can have its cake and eat it; especially when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights. I would suggest that Trevor's emphasis on the *difference* of Whiteness can be read in terms of an idea encountered several times throughout this project; that in the presence of sex/gender similitude, 'race' might be capable of restoring an erotics of difference on which 'desire *as* sexuality' can pivot. Emphasising the *difference* in 'racial' difference may also position Trevor in particular ways. Through *having* this accentuated White difference, Trevor is able, on the registers of psychic experience, to *become* it; yet an accentuated dynamic of eroticised 'interracial' difference also simultaneously re-inscribes Trevor's identity (and identifications *as*) as the Black partner. As such, the identificatory dynamics here may be read as suggestive of the 'both/and' posture of Muñozian *disidentification* (1999). Another way of saying this might be that being with a White man might make Trevor feel *Blacker and Whiter* at the same time. In suggesting that, following a difference of opinion, he and his White partner can kiss and hang out, Trevor also hints at the possibility of *sameness in difference* (Benjamin, 1995), the fact that the binary 'identity: difference' might collapse under the weight of certain affirmative intersubjective relations. It is notable nonetheless that Trevor's appetite for divergent opinions does not extend to his own family or the wider African-Caribbean community.

I wonder if the inability to tolerate challenges from his Black family and community while he actively embraces those from his White boyfriend again reflects psychosocial processes of splitting and projection into 'good White' and

'bad Black'. This would then locate Trevor in the challenging position of a Black subject attempting to construct themselves from within (neo-)colonial discourses of 'race', Blackness and sexuality. I want to end this analysis – somewhat depressingly - by demonstrating one of the ways in which I think this lack of integration of good/bad, Black/White within Trevor's identity and sexuality, facilitates Trevor's relationship with a racist White man.

Trevor relayed a conversation with his partner – whose sexuality is oriented to Black men - concerning his attitude to other Black men, and his feelings for Trevor:

“And he goes, “You know, a lot of the Black guys that I get to meet on Grindr, it's just like bang it out and that's the end of it.” He was like, “You're the first Black guy that's come along that there's a certain edge to you”. And he put it this way, sorry to be blunt but he said, “I can fuck you at night, but have a conversation with you in the morning”. That's the way he put it, and I was like, “Oh” (laughs) thanks!” “That's a compliment I guess (laughs)”

In this rendition, for his current White partner, Trevor is the first Black man who can be considered in terms of anything other than his body. His partner depicts a dynamic in which the instrumentalisation of the hook-up meets the historic instrumentalisation of Black people; something about which this man seems either oblivious and/or unconcerned. It is especially pertinent to note the enduring Manichean division of Black: white in terms of body: mind, and the historical reduction of Black people to nothing more than their bodies, producing fear and envy - and always-already erotic desire - in the White gaze. In this case Trevor's partner's erotic desires for Black men seems to be predicated on just this dynamic (until Trevor rocks up and shatters the stereotype). Trevor seems ambivalent about the rather backhanded compliment he receives here - “that's a compliment I guess” - but when I listen back to the recording, something about his voice also conveys pride. In the affect conveyed by Trevor's voice, I read a sense of satisfaction prompted by his being singled out as the 'good' or

‘exceptional’ Black person, who consequently gains access to ‘White society’. There are further echoes of this when Trevor describes his boyfriend’s patronising behaviours and the behaviour of his White friends at a brunch date to which Trevor is invited:

Trevor (T): But he takes me there and he knows I can hold my own and he does this thing, my current boyfriend does a thing where he will say, “So Trevor and I were having a conversation last night and he brought up a really good point”. And he would say it to the group, and you could just see all of them thinking, “Oh I never, I never thought of it that way, or I never thought of that point”. And it’s just, it’s just, it’s just really, I just sit back and observe and once I see the looks on their faces change it’s like, you know, and I, I kid you not, my current boyfriend, we went to a drinks slash lunch thing last Sunday, and these are friends that I have met over time. And I kid you not it’s like, “What do you think about this?” “What do you think about this?” It’s like, “Oh okay!” Now they know that I’m just more than the good looks or the Black skin or the whatever. It’s interesting to see that.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about the situation where your boyfriend kind of says, “Oh Trevor made a good point?”

T: Nothing, nothing. Because you know, my boyfriend and I will have the most uncomfortable conversations. He’ll say oh I went into the phone shop today and he says, “You Black people just waste too much time”

This exchange was a particularly revealing and affectively intense part of the interview. Trevor directly takes-up the trope of Black physicality and his potential reduction to “good looks” and “Black skin” and takes evident pleasure in demonstrating to his boyfriend’s White friends that he also has a brilliant mind; is in fact capable of thinking things they cannot think themselves. His repetition of “I kid you not” conveys something of Trevor’s own sense of surprise, perhaps shot through with satisfaction, at the effects he is able to

produce in his boyfriend's White friends. His boyfriend conveys his own shock at this revelation through the laboured and performative relaying of conversations he has had with Trevor – "So Trevor and I were having a conversation last night, and he brought up a really good point" – a formulation that I interpreted as patronising. Not wanting to say as much in the interview context, I more ambiguously asked Trevor how this made him feel. Trevor nonetheless seems to have known what I was driving at, as evidenced by his immediate segue into a discussion of his boyfriend's racism, although notably - and perhaps unconvincingly - he actually says it makes him feel "nothing", suggesting it is not something he wants to think about, and that unconsciously he might already have marked it as difficult and painful. A double meaning may also be hiding within this "nothing" though, in which Trevor means both that he felt an absence of affect *and* that he felt "like nothing", an absence of value. Trevor then cuts to his boyfriend's racist phone shop anecdote, which clearly betrays a highly racist lens on the world in which 'race' is essentialised and biological, and Black people share collective responsibility for their behaviours, even before we get onto his invocation of an age-old anti-Black stereotype about laziness and timewasting. Thus Trevor's narrative in our interview might also be read as a sometimes-painful evocation of the limits and inherent ambivalences of 'transracial' intimacy (Lewis, 2009; Winddance-Twine, 2010).

Trevor's interview attests to the bind, the catch-22, in which a same-sex attracted Black man can find himself. He has fought for and been afforded a form of 'sexual freedom', but at what cost? Regulated on all sides, he is forced to make an impossible choice between a racialised identity anchored to a family and community that he has rejected - as he believes it rejected him - while this new 'White' object, the mainstream gay community - represented by his boyfriend and friends - serves up its own persecutions. In relation to these - the more and less explicit anti-Black racisms that appear quotidian by Trevor's account of them - Trevor seems to be engaged in psychosocial processes of denial and dissociation. Unlike disavowal, where that which one wants to deny is burrowed away out of conscious thought, disassociation involves living with the denied while avoiding engaging with it; keeping it in plain sight with a psychic *cordon*

sanitaire. Where Josh (Case Study 3) negotiates the bind of seemingly incommensurate sexualities-identities by living separate but parallel lives, Trevor has thrown his lot in with a contemporary gay culture saturated with White racism. While the category 'gay' can be extended to include non-White subjectivities and people of colour; in the present example this occurs on assimilationist terms, so that the default gay subject remains White, and, walking a few steps behind, the Black man can only ever be his partner.

Discussion

In response to an uncomfortable but incontrovertible fact about sexuality – its imbrication with, saturation by, and co-constitution in and through, ‘race’ and processes of racialisation – this project has advanced a novel theoretical approach I’ve called the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’ (‘RoDaS’). Having developed this framework ‘in theory’, I applied it at two field sites – specifically gay male/MSM ones – deploying it (via a theoretically-driven thematic analysis and a psychoanalytically-informed method of discourse analysis) as a way of reading the racialised, gendered selves and sexualities presented on Grindr and in the research interviews. Here, I conclude my project by presenting some broad discussion points, while eyeing possible avenues and angles for future research.

The racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’: in theory and ‘in the field’

Through historical and contemporary theories of desire and sexuality - drawing on psychoanalysis, queer and queer of colour theory, and Black and ‘quare’ studies – I constructed the racialisation of ‘desire *as* sexuality’ (‘RoDaS’) framework as an heuristic through which to apprehend and interrogate the phenomenon that most often goes by the name ‘racial preference’. I’ve suggested the process unfolds on at least three registers (with the fourth picked up in the subsection ‘What scope for queer transformations?’ below).

First, at puberty - the second phase in a diphasic model of sexuality - desire seeks out (and finds in abundance) repositories for itself, social structures which mirror its own (ambivalence, difference and similitude, dominance and submission [Benjamin, 1983]). Here ‘race’, gender, and class (to name but three) acquire their erotic pre-eminence for the subject in the course of their sexual *subjectification*. I suggest that the ways in which this happens - the particular formation of sexuality the subject constructs and inhabits - is the product of an anxiously-mediated, multivalent constellation of identifications (formulated dynamically and psychosocially after the Muñozian concept of *disidentification*

[1999]), out of which the subject comes to constitute themselves. These identifications are formulated as containing both a desire *to have* and *to be*, with Muñozian disidentification promoting a posture of 'both/and' (in lieu of 'either/or'), which is complimented by psychoanalysis' suggestion that in the play of the phantasies through which identifications are psychically-mediated, the subject can be in two places at once; both subject *and* object. This fact in turn limns the relationality of both erotic desire and identity. In the course of this process of rendering life experiences, which were until then merely *sensual*, explicitly in terms of the *sexual/erotic*, the new repositories for desire - those dominant categories of the social, which are always-also categories of difference and othering - become eroticised, that is, erotically invested and erotically meaningful to the subject. I argue that this process - along with desire's insatiable quality, which leaves the subject always wanting more ('race', gender, class etc.) - should contribute to any analysis of the stickiness and intractability of these categories.

The second register of desire's rendering '*as sexuality*' occurs when following this awakening of a new kind of sexual consciousness, the until-then latently-apprehended erotic contents of social categories of difference and othering (the sexualised representations that saturate 'race' and gender) are properly appreciated, and invested-in, by the subject. In this sense, sexuality seems to stretch out through history as an historical formation, with the cumulative residues of preceding generations and societies haunting contemporary discourses and representations, and the sexualities and sexual subjects that these mould and inflect.

The third register of '*desire as sexuality*' acknowledges that the arrival of sexuality also necessitates, at least in contemporary Western cultures, the construction of a narrative-of-self to situate, validate and communicate (under the weight of a profound societal demand) the subject's '*desire as sexuality*' in relation to social norms and the dominant categories of the social (with sexual and gender difference privileged, and 'race' repressed and occluded). This process also contributes (and adds another register) to the work of sexuality as

the *funnelling*, *disciplining*, and *fixation* of desire; a process that both responds to and is fraught with anxiety, and which is always 'in process' (if not flux) and never fully achieved (especially as it is continually undermined in unconscious phantasy). On this register of sexuality as a narrative-of-self, the proximity and relationality of both 'desire *as* sexuality' and identity is thrown once more into relief.

The racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' and lived experiences of racialised subjectivity

Apprehending and accenting desire – rather than the attending to sexuality as a social formation - also becomes a vantage point from which to contemplate the uniqueness of the subject's relationship to 'race' and their racialised identifications and objects. If we merely ask subjects to describe their sexualities – as happens across Grindr profiles – we are left with reductive subject positions, which suggest a uniformity to the significances and meanings ascribed to 'race' and racialised formations by individual subjects, flattening and eliding the diversity bubbling under the bonnet. I nonetheless take these accounts to have been fruitful points at which to access sexuality as a narrative of self, while limning the proximity of desire and identity, and the relationality of both; especially as constructed in and through racialised and gendered positions, which are inherently (and on Grindr, demonstrably) relational formations (Butler, 2004; Lewis, 2007). This relationality played itself out across Grindr profiles in the racialised, gendered formations through which profile users presented themselves and their desired others (narratives, in short, of sexuality); objects of desire which seemed the co-constitute, buttress, and re-inscribe the identities of the profiles' authors. While I sought continually to limn particularity, Grindr profiles also demonstrate the degree to which history works through 'desire *as* sexuality'; subjects become vectors for history but in a way that nonetheless allows them to exercise elements of agency (not necessarily always girded by intentionality) – because subjects and their psyches are dynamic. Grindr profiles thus provided apposite texts to demonstrate the fruitfulness of

the 'RoDaS' framework as one that accommodates both history and a dynamic psyche.

The importance of the psychic and the social came through in the participant narratives in chapter 5; narratives of lived experience that fleshed out the subject positions enunciated and enacted on Grindr, accenting in the process the dynamism and multivalence of the identificatory clusters around which participant's identities, desires, and sexualities pivot. The proximity of 'desire as sexuality' and identity is predicated on their dual anchoring in identification, but also, crucially, on the queer limning of that presence within every identification of a desire both *to have* and *to be*; a limning which disidentification (Muñoz, 1999) deploys in the service of the queer of colour subject who *cannot afford to choose*. The unfeasibility of choosing was present in both Josh and Trevor's biographical interviews. For Trevor, the proximity of desire and identity shone through in his ostensible refusal of elements of Black family/culture/identity (which he believed had ostracised and pathologised him *first*), which appeared to manifest in an idealised depiction of Whiteness, his (desire for a) White partner, and the White gay scene to which this partner facilitated access. Nonetheless, Trevor's proximity to Whiteness also re-inscribed his Black 'racial' identity and investments, as he positioned his desire for his White partner (and his frequent recourse to explicit racism) in terms of *difference from* Whiteness, and a sort of *Black* life perspective, which allowed him to challenge and cut-through his partners' ways of seeing and being in the world. For Josh, with his sexuality seeming to pivot around an anxiously-guarded split between desires for White men and Black women, his racialised sexual orientations may read in numerous ways. His orientation to White men offers the occasion to *have* Whiteness (by physical proximity) and to *be* White (through identification and unconscious phantasy); simultaneously, and echoing Trevor, the act of 'becoming' White through the eyes of his male partners cannot but re-accent Josh's own Blackness. Such is the creative force of the unconscious and the fruitfulness of psychoanalysis as a position through which to read the interview material, especially when, as here, it is read through the lens of Black and queer studies' revisionist formulations.

Whiteness

Throughout this project, sexuality as a White edifice has emerged time and again as a constitutive feature of the Occidental model of sexuality (Thomas, 2007) (a model which currently appears to be the only show in town). Through theory - especially the work of scholars in Black Studies, 'quare' and queer of colour traditions - I have argued that the default sexual subject is White. Given that this is also a straight White (male) subject, I suggest that by the same logic (although clearly by virtue of highly different histories) by which some authors (Spillers, 2003; Thomas, 2007; Holland, 2012; Weheliye, 2014) suggest it may be impossible to speak of *Black* sexuality *per se* - that is, given the Whiteness and anti-Blackness that saturate the socio-cultural order (or in Lacanian terms, the Symbolic) out of which sexuality is constructed - I think it may be also be difficult to talk about gay male (or queer) sexuality *per se*. What same-sex attracted subjects take, render and construct for themselves as sexuality is locked into the language and symbolics of heteronormativity; something that our queer impetus to differentiate and define ourselves in opposition to the straight, may, at times, obfuscate.

If this argument does indeed hold, then it logically implies a *triple alienation* for gays/MSM/queers of colour who are: 1) like all subjects forced to submit their desire to the social; 2) in a context in which this social is *both* White supremacist and anti-Black; *and* 3) heteronormative and anti-gay/queer. On Grindr this becomes manifest as an alienation from the already-alienated White gay community, of which I have argued this app remains a pre-eminent (virtual) spatial node. In turns such racialised formations as (White) Grindr and the (White) mainstream gay community become objects of rejection, resistance, and disidentification, to which the profiles of Black Grindr users (and, in aggregate, *Black Grindr/s*) testify. As delineated above, such disidentifications with formations of gay male Whiteness were present in the narratives of Black participants Josh and Trevor, while Whiteness also emerged as a *challenge* for White participants. For Giacomo, an insecure, subordinated White identity

required constant shoring-up; a dynamic to which his desires for racial difference - whether in the form of Black men (rendering Giacomo White *by contrast*) or Celtic men (rendering him White *by association*) – seemed to respond. For Anthony - a White man whose sexuality is exclusively oriented to Black men - his sexuality seemed to manifest a wish to cast-off and flee his own Whiteness (that is, *to have*, and in so doing, *to be* Black), while his broader narrative conveyed the depth of his investments and imbrications in the privileges and protections of this self-same racial formation. Across Grindr and within the interviews, at the level of subject positions and subjectivity, the relationality and proximity of identity and ‘desire *as* sexuality’ shines through.

Future avenues for research

While hoping this project has provided a novel and perceptive contribution to the social and academic debates circulating around the nexus of ‘race’ and sexuality, I have also felt inspired to consider new methodologies or avenues of enquiry along the way. I discuss some of these here, both to limn the limitations of my own work and to think generatively about how it might be built-upon⁷².

Methodologically, I am very interested in the potential of the focus group to facilitate lively and dialogic discussion, and in thinking about the 1:1 research interview as a co-construction between one researcher and one participant, I would be interested in tackling the same research questions as I engaged in chapter 5 through the plurality of subject positions and inter-subjectivities brought into play by the focus group scenario. Effective and creative facilitation becomes vital here, allowing the group to contain and tolerate multiple, often divergent, opinions and to ensure that participants who struggle to assert their voices in the face of potential contestation feel able to do so (such subjects’ perspectives may, in fact, still be best captured through the 1:1 interview). I think there is also great potential in pursuing more long-term collaborative

⁷² As this was interpreted otherwise by one reader, I also feel I should add that the reference to the ‘new’ here relates strictly to the scope of my own research practice and to the sub-field of what might be called ‘racialised sexuality’ studies, and I am not making any claims to broader methodological innovation.

approaches to research interviewing, such as conducting secondary interviews with research participants to discuss the write-up and analytic interpretations made by the interviewer. This is something I felt was more important given the case study format of my write-ups, which might impact participants more than an aggregated analysis which fragments interview narratives to build a more general case.

I am also interested in the idea of action research (Adelman, 1993), particularly in so far as it might provide a small contribution toward shifting the non-communitarian structure of the 'gay community'. The potential for consciousness-raising groups, such as those described by Berubé (2001) to interrogate Whiteness within gay male/MSM spaces and the role of White men in perpetuating and sustaining structures of White privilege would be one such, much-needed, example. These could also very well function as a site for the focus-group research described above. Encouragingly, in the last twelve months, over one hundred thousand pounds in crowd-funding was secured to open a new LGBTQ+ community centre in London. Such spaces are more precious and vital than ever, as other LGBTQ+ spaces close down. My own view is that the loss of bars and clubs, the vast majority of which it would be an unedifying stretch to describe as "communitarian" spaces⁷³, is an opportunity to take stock and think about how gay men and MSM might more effectively earn the mantle "community" as a descriptor of their social spaces and networks. For me, this would involve dissolving the boundaries that exist between the L, G, B, T, and Q+ in LGBTQ+, promoting inclusion and proliferating spaces that attend to wider (rather than just sexual) subjectivity, seeing sexual non-normativity as a starting point rather than an end-in-itself for the creation of healing spaces and networks of support.

⁷³ See for example, the campaign to keep open the nightclub XXL in Southwark. The owner of the club now leans on the anti-gentrification discourse of gay community erosion, even while he has gone on record repeatedly defending XXL's racist and anti-trans door policy. For too long in fact, the gay male community has been in the hands of a few profit-minded, so-called entrepreneurs (Mark Ames of XXL, Jeremy Joseph of GAY and Heaven), something which 'gentrification' may somewhat ironically provide an opportunity to address.

Given my argument that same-sexualities are produced in and through the same heteronormative matrix as heterosexuality, I think there is also great potential for studies of racialised sexuality that look at the straight, gay, bi and queer contexts together, even while wanting to hold on to elements of contextual specificity. Talking with straight friends about their experiences using Tinder, Hinge, Bumble, and similar apps, I believe there are numerous lines of commonality and divergence to explore, and also convinced that we are only just beginning to tarry around the edges of what digital networking technologies are doing to our intimates lives. I think there is an unequivocal need for research that engages these changes more fully. Research across the spectrum of socially-salient sexual identity categories would also have the benefit of troubling the artificially-imposed boundaries constructed around categories of sexuality, which as researchers we risk perpetuating - even while adopting a critical stance - especially where we are understandably seeking to capture the particularity of lived experience. In accenting the role of social power moving through sexuality, I think I have also risked reducing the scope for thinking about points of resistance, which I'd like to centre more prominently in future work. While I remain sceptical about the degree to which the gay/straight binary is being dissolved by a new paradigm of sexual fluidity (especially as it seems to me this fluidity is really a proliferation of identity categories that remain yoked to a constitutive fixity), I think researchers have a responsibility to engage with the changes that may be happening, especially in terms of intergenerational cleavages, as new sexual subjects arrive on the scene without much of the baggage of Section 28-era homophobia and with the L and G - if not yet the B, T and Q+ - positions framed in terms of a hitherto unimaginable *ordinariness* (thinking specifically about the context in the UK).

What scope for queer transformations?

In apprehending the intensity of the forces by which desire becomes racialised as sexuality, it is easy for pessimism to rise up. The social seems thick, heavy and saturating, and 'race' and racism - the latter violent, spectacular, and grotesque - weighs the subject down with particular intensity. It is perhaps with something

of this in mind that the usually-utopian bell hooks – in a roundtable on the topic of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* – asks, “whether the law of the sadomasochistic master/slave relationship is, finally, infinitely more sexual, more pleasurable and more erotic than freedom and decolonization, and... this is the difficulty we have in moving towards some kind of liberatory vision” (1996: 182). Despite the best efforts of the postmodernists (and not least among them, queer theorists) to theorise, promote, and thereby conjure fluidity, they have not succeeded in undoing the fixity that defines ‘desire as sexuality’. This is not to suggest that there is no way out, merely that the impetus is predominantly towards definitional stasis (sexuality), and away from the potentially-enriching, but almost-always anxiety-inducing, possibilities of the novel and unknown. This is not to suggest that there is no scope for sexuality to evolve. The dynamism of identifications and the psychic processes that govern them suggests that new and different erotic desires can be accented and accommodated as part of the assemblage of the subject’s sexuality, but this scope for change is checked by this sexuality’s operating under a rubric of submission; one that is always-already saturated with social categories of difference and othering, while being driven by an impetus to define and fix. As such, under the current order of things, the overall movement of sexuality is most likely to be one of incremental change than grand about-turns. This is reflected at the social-level too, where attempts to domesticate queer sexuality suggest that if change is to happen it must leave the dominant pillars of the social organisation of sexuality in tact (Warner, 2000).

Reflecting on Grindr as a site to track the racialisation of desire rendered as sexuality – and as a site at which desire becomes sexuality – it strikes me that the ways in which technology intersects with our dating lives is profoundly reshaping the latter (although the effects are not all one way). Given that ‘desire as sexuality’ is often at least in part a question of orientation, attention, and repetition compulsion (in short, what starts out as a passing fancy gives way to something more like the psychic-structure of a fetish) then the contribution of hook-up and dating apps such as Grindr (this great, virtual sorting-system for sexuality) appears to be a further delimitation of desire; one arrived at by

encouraging and incentivising users to define what they're looking for, and in so doing to close their minds (and their legs) to the full range of possibilities. I think, then, we could be looking at a future in which sexuality proliferates and desire is further deadened as a result.

Apprehending this state of affairs, I also reminded again of the work of Darieck Scott (1992, 2014, and especially 2010), which has been highly fruitful for my analyses throughout this project, and through which I want to suggest a fourth register on which the racialisation of 'desire *as* sexuality' might unfold: namely, that there is an eroticization of the process of submission to the social itself; that is, the movement from desire to sexuality is eroticized (I am even tempted to say fetishized). Through his analysis of the pornographic writings of the Black, queer, theorist and science fiction author Samuel R. Delany, which feature prominent depictions of S/M and domination/submission dynamics, Scott advances the argument that the subject's interpellation into the social is always-in-itself a process of "submission". Highly pertinent for this project is Scott's quasi-rhetorical demand, "Is not the process of identification always just a process of forced reception of authority?" (2010: 255). Continuing in the psychoanalytic vein Scott initiates, we might frame the erotic components of this submission to the social in terms of the eroticisation of the subject's (always-only-partial) acceptance and adherence to the 'reality principle'. This principle, which for Freud constitutes one of the two governing forces of mental life, is a "regulatory principle", and one which governs the subject's adaption to the reality of the *world-out-there* (precisely as it becomes the *world-in-here*), involving "the transformation of free energy into bound energy" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973/2006: 379-382). Topographically-speaking, the reality principle is also – like sexuality⁷⁴ – concerned with the *pre-conscious* and the *conscious*, while desire resides amid the creativity and fluidity of the *unconscious*. As such then, desire and/as sexuality may be said to implicate the tangled, ambivalent relationship between – for Freud – the two governing forces of mental life - the

⁷⁴ Though this is more complex: as a broader assemblage I suggest that sexuality implicates the unconscious as well; as a social identity and narrative-of-self, I would argue it largely pertains to the conscious and preconscious.

reality and the pleasure principles - establishing their place at the centre of the subject's mental (and their/our social) life.

Nonetheless, Scott's work (2010) also provides us with some grounds for optimism. Drawing specifically on the African American experience, he argues that despite the most acute abjection, the potential for joy and for *something like* agency can be recuperated. Scott formulates this through the both/and posture of something being "simultaneously subjugating and yet psychically freeing" (2010: 30). I am reminded here too of Butler's argument in *The Psychic Life of Power* that, "To desire the conditions of one's own subordination is thus required to persist as oneself" (1997: 8). This may be the essential conundrum of subjectivity, and one that is condensed in that privileged terrain of it; 'desire as sexuality'. The potential for (desire rendered as) sexualities to act in themselves as a liberatory mechanism, to become, that is, *the impetus* for revolutionary change, is often elusive. It is for this reason that I continue to find queer theories such a tremendous resource, especially those that simultaneously limn the scale of oppressions while gesturing toward the potential for queer utopias (Muñoz, 2009). This dynamic is manifest in the work of C. Riley Snorton, who in his reflections on living as a no-hormone, non-operative Black trans man, acknowledges the degree to which the subject only comes-to-be in and through their submissions to the social, while suggesting that these submissions are never total; the potential to queer, to disidentify through a both/and posture, remains. Mario Mieli's work (2002/2018) also testifies to the power of the social while providing rich pickings for a hermeneutics of hope (Muñoz, 2009). Mieli argues the key to liberating desire lies in the transformation of the social:

"The struggle to liberate desire, the 'underneath', is a struggle for the (re)conquest of life, a struggle to overcome the anxious, role-bound and ever threatened survival that we are forced into, to put an end to the neurotic and grotesque spectacle in which are trapped, all more or less, by being negated, separated from one another and from ourselves. It is not a question of redeeming the noble savage (which is itself a bourgeois myth), but of releasing our aesthetic and communist potential, our desire

for community and for pleasure that has grown latently over millennia.
‘The cultivation of the five senses is the work of all previous history’
(Marx)”. Mario Mieli (2002/2018: 182).

Writing in the midst of the Cold War in the later nineteen seventies and at the vanguard of the gay liberation movement, Mieli put his faith in communism to unleash desire’s potential. With the benefit of hindsight this position strikes me as naïve, not least in the degree to which it seems to imply that communism will liberate desire such that sexuality is no longer necessary. If, however, we read Mieli’s utopic argument alongside Scott’s striking observation about the erotics of the subject’s *submission* to the social – a framing that can also be rendered in terms of a disidentification with this social; a wresting of pleasure from the jaws of defeat – we might arrive at a different conclusion. For if, indeed, the subject’s adaption to, and acceptance of, the reality principle *necessitates* the process of submission, then a glimmer of hope emerges in the prospect of transforming the social reality to which the subject submits.

As such, the onus is on us to continue to try and create *queer* spaces in which the mobility of desire can be unleashed; spaces defined by mutual curiosity, compassion, and respect. A queer space for desire and/as sexuality would involve (but not be limited to): a place in which we could temporarily park our sexual *identities*, and explore the possibilities of human contact and what *might be* (diluting sexuality’s emphasis on what has *already been*); a place in which the stakes for such experimentation are low, because they no longer imply questions about social ontology; in which discussions of desire/sexuality do not compound the anxiety already circulating around the objects they interrogate – in which the end goal is not a blame-game; in which it is, rather, the reciprocal achievement of pleasure, without seeking to dictate or anticipate in advance what that pleasure should look like. If, by the very nature of our constitution as highly complex social beings, we must accept desire’s rendering *as* sexuality as a necessary fact, then the solution lies not in problematising and pathologising subjects and objects of desire, but rather in the radical transformation of the social and its dominant modes of relationality. Here, in the contingency of history and the

social, and the potential for (something like) collective agency, lies our greatest cause for optimism on the terrain of 'desire *as* sexuality'.

End Notes

On the homo/hetero- binary: Problematisations of the identity category 'gay' are enumerated throughout chapter 1, and relate broadly to the racialised, political formation of "homonormativity" (Duggan, 2003). Beyond this though, I take broader issue with the "homo/hetero binary" on which 'gay' is situated. I take the "homo-/hetero- binary" (Sedgwick, 1990) - and its more fashionable corollary "gay/straight" - to be highly problematic historical constructs that collapse the diversity and heterogeneity of erotic desire under the crushing weight of their monolithic interpellatory force. Some pertinent objections to this binary for the purposes of the present project are: (1) it privileges biological sex without attending to gender, 'race', or class, to name but three primary societal rubrics in which sexuality finds fertile ground. To take the first of these, and as numerous queer scholars have elucidated (Sedgwick [1990/2008], Halperin [2000] and Sinfield [2002]), the categories gay/homosexual contain a tension between formations rooted in logics of gender-transitivity and those of gender-sameness, a tension which has never been resolved, and which it now becomes the work of gay men and women to sort out for themselves⁷⁵ (at great personal and social cost), a predicament made manifest in gay male spaces through phenomena such as: (i) the pathologising diagnosis of 'internalised homophobia' meted out to MSM whose sexualities orient them towards masculinity (while fourth wave feminism has put paid to any suggestions that straight females' attraction to masculinity precludes a self-empowered feminism); (ii) the implicit gender hierarchy that puts masculine and "straight acting" over "camp" and "queeny" for ALL gay men (when quite clearly many "straight acting" men, especially those who actually live as 'straight', actively seek out feminine qualities in the men with which they couple); and (iii) the apocryphal "top shortage" in gay male communities (in short, I'm suggesting this arises because most of the tops are partnered with women), to name but three. As Sedgwick (1990) also famously argued, another tension located in the category "homosexual" is the contradiction between what she terms a "minoritizing view"

⁷⁵ A dynamic that is true of every category of social difference – including 'race', gender, and class – founded, defined, and propagated by - and in the interests of -the dominant social formation, 'Man' (Wynter, 2003; McKittrick, 2010).

and a “universalizing view” (1990/2008: 1). These roughly translate as the idea that homosexuality is the exclusive preserve of certain marked subjects and their inherently homosexual psyches and bodies, versus the idea that everyone might have the potential to *go gay*, with the latter fuelling the especially anxiety-ridden policing of sex in all its forms, and the homo/hetero boundary itself. While both discourses endure into the present, thanks not least to the (admittedly well-meaning, if arguably misplaced) efforts of the “born this way/love is love” advocates, (I would argue that) the minority view now undoubtedly prevails, so that; (2) the homo/hetero binary acts as an ontological species-moniker, such that the subject’s position in relation to sexual difference is formulated as biological/genetic/natural/unchangeable; as such the stakes of sexual experimentation are raised, wherein to engage in same-sex activities is immediately to call one’s identity, and by extension, one’s very being into question. I argue emphatically that this highly policed boundary is depriving sexual subjects – and especially gay and queer men and women - of sex and meaningful romantic relationships with every passing day and must therefore be abolished as a matter of urgency, that is, as though our queer lives and libidos depended on it; (3) resting on the force of this species-moniker and in concert with these bio-genetic discourses, the ‘gay’/‘homo’ Other becomes the repository for straight projections, and is forced to contain every kind of anxiety and pathology. Even the prospect of assimilation merely displaces these anxieties onto a related binary of “good gay: bad gay”, wherein the latter figure picks up the pathological slack, while the former makes himself comfortable in the master’s house (Lorde, 2017). These processes of projection are girded by the splitting processes involved in the homo/hetero binary, which psychosocially speaking, is an example of a paranoid-schizoid organisation, wherein binaries – pure and discrete – of good:bad are maintained to organise and regulate subjects; (4) the homo/hetero binary reinforces desire’s fixity for both straights and gays, precluding numerous kinds of erotic engagement and promoting gay identity as the only way to understand same-sex attraction, an ideological imposition that weighs heavily on queer and questioning adolescents, as well as adults in all stages of their lives; (5) The homo/hetero binary promotes an excessive and oppressive structuring of gay sexuality, by instantiating identities,

communities, and sexual fields, which begin to inflect desires in quite specific ways e.g. clone culture, leather culture, and particular dynamics and representations of 'transracial' (erotic) intimacy, which are then repeated ad infinitum across gay magazines, porn, and other repositories of 'community' culture. While my own formulation puts identification and identity at the core of erotic desire, I question why we need identities anchored to our sexual appetites. Could we not in fact live happily – and with far greater potential for human connection – in a world without sexuality (Dean, 2000)?; (6) The homo/hetero binary is a foundational fulcrum on which pivots the material base and ideological superstructure of heteronormativity (Warner, 1991) and “the straight mind” (Wittig, 1992), a racialised (White), gendered (male) and classed (upper-middle) formation. Heteronormativity sustains the politics of the normal and the pathological fear of difference (from the straight White, affluent male) that define experiences of subjectification and subjectivity in our present globalised, (post)modern, (neo-)colonial epoch. As Greg Thomas argues, the homo/hetero binary is, “conventionally white and white supremacist as it upholds a much larger sexual opposition between the “civilized” and the “uncivilized”, the “colonizer” and the “colonized” (2007: 22); Therefore, last and certainly not least (7), we must emphasise that, forming part of the European Enlightenment project of (straight, White) “Man” (Wynter, 2003), the homo/hetero binary is a colonial-era relic and an especially pernicious neo-colonial export in the present. This is not to deny the struggles and dangers negotiated daily by queers in nations intolerant of any sexual expression beyond compulsory heterosexuality (another colonial export), but rather to insist that the homo/hetero binary hardly helps matters, not least for any one of the reasons I discuss above. Rather, we must face up to what Thomas calls, “the really nasty fact that sexual personas and practices are ritually constructed as well as theorised in the service of colonial imperial structures of ‘race’, or white supremacy” (2007: 2). While acknowledging the political expedience of the “gay” in gay liberation politics, I believe that at this point in time, and on the basis of all of the above, the price we are paying for this label/heuristic/*psycho-epistemological trap* is simply too high⁷⁶.

⁷⁶ I acknowledge nonetheless that “gay” is a meaningful point of identification and psychic

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investment for millions of same-sex attracted men, and I am not of course, proposing that we banish gay identity or culture. However, I do argue that it can no longer be allowed to sit atop its perch as the only homo show in town!

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Appendix A – Materials pertaining to the theoretically-driven thematic analysis of Grindr profiles (Chapter 4)

Below are screenshots of the Grindr profiles workbook I created to capture and transcribe the profile texts I analyse in chapter 4. Within the analysis I reference profiles following the convention GU(Grindr User)+number, the number corresponds to the row number in this work book (e.g. GU2 = row 2 below).

A		B		C		D	
	Ethnicity	Position	Profile Title			Profile Text	
1	Latino	Bottom	ILoveMyBlack			Nice and good looking guy (what the people says) here looking to connect with a decent black man... and hopefully get out of here... I love good vibe. Safe always!	
2	Black	Top				into filmmaking, screenwriting and love sleeping :) I don't gym. So freaking lazy. (stroke chin emoji). Thinking about starting gym. PS. Under 22. must have a face pic. Not into white guys.	
3	White	Bottom	BBC Gangbang			My place as a white sissy is on my knees surrounded by hard and horny black men. BBC exclusive! Over 3k Black men from 17 countries worshipped. I also run my own professional and discreet sexual worship and cum collection program exclusive to black men.	
4	White	Versatile	nicec@ck			lost chats. Bi. Lad dad. Outdoor. Wank m8. like ghole. Be fit...pref white guys sorry.	
5	Black	Vers Bottom	SinCiti			Blk 4 Blk/Mixed Blk. Bottom if it gets to that and hella good at oral (tongue out emoji). Let's have a laugh if we click, we can take it from there... Just like everyone else I do have a preference Black or black mixed only.	
6	Black	Top	Black TOP			Discreet. Sex. Black guys only.	
7	White	Bottom				100% natural. Alpha male top goes to the first line. Straight and single guys only. Also I prefer white guy (rosy-cheeked smiley emoji)	
8	Black	Vers Top	Bi lad (purple devil emoji)			Dom bi lad here, visiting London. After fun and chats. Can't accom btw. Into toned/muscly/twink lads and love a nice (peach emoji - ass) esp in a jockstrap (monkey covering eyes emoji). No black fetishising chat please. Also I don't send face on here, take it or leave it.	
9	Black	Vers Top	Melanin			"I'm jus tryna be me doing what I gotta do... Some people think that I'm just sittin on top of the world". *Preference = Black*	
10	Black	Vers Top	TopDaddy			Brazilian Top, refined and honest guy looking for sweet bottom boys. Living some months in London. I love delicate, clever and sweet guys. Female boys and bitches are also welcome. I prefer 18-30 years-old white guys.	
11	Latino	Top				All around geek, video games, anime, comics etc. Also into basketball, football, photography, hiking and biking. Being conversational is sexy. If you mention "BBC" to me or have it in your bio, you're getting blocked.	
12	Black	Vers Top	J			From Paris France (French flag emoji)	
13	Black	Vers Bottom	BeBlack			(Back in the gym [winking face emoji]) Look to date white skinny chav twinks/Androgynous/CD/TV/TS genuine friendship and hopefully more, SLIM/SKINNY ONLY. Not interested in NSA, love CHAV/SCALLY lads too. FFS Not interested in black, indian or older guys WHATSOEVER.	
14	Black	Top	(Looking - eyes emoji)4SKINNY			Early pre-op trans woman. Sugar baby. Looking for chemistry with new tops and see where it goes. I accom. I make interracial porn with black men and do cam shows.	
15	White	Bottom	Sugar Baby (down arrow emoji = bottom)			I have pics just ask :) Video games. Reggae and RnB. TV. Nature. Black men.	
16	White	Holding hands up emoji	Roadmen Only			Xx	
17	Black	Bottom	Blk 4 blk			Looking for Discreet/muscular black and mixed guys. Not much interest in white guys on this app. Snap available if you don't want to send face pics here.	
18	Black	Vers Top	Trinidad/Tobago Flag Emoji			Approach with caution... Yes that is me in my pic	
19	Black	Vers Top	(Eyes = looking emoji) Blk/Mxd Blk			THE HOUSE OF BBC ESC. (diamond emoji) BBC BOIS ARE BACK MORE TO PIC FROM. NEW MEMBER SAHARA WITH HIS 10.INCH DOUBBLE ROOM AVAIL E14. ALL SAINTS. At the end of the day we will all end up in bed, either our own or someone else's (water/cum emoji). Briefcase emoji (=work) EC3R. House emoji (=live) E14. South Asians (heart emoji = love). Tap or message + no face photo = block (block emoji).	
20	Black	Vers Top	BBC CLUB			OVER 250 LOADS OF SUPERIOR DNA FROM OVER 170 BLACK MEN! USED AS LUBE.	
21	Black	Vers Top	SUCK YOU? (water droplets/cum emoji)			private/adult night/group sex catering for hot sexy black guys only.	
22	White	Versatile	BBC CLUB			Being an old school romantic in a hookup culture is a special kind of hell. Be single, have a pic, sense of humour, don't be angry at life and we will get along. Prefer: Beard, blue eyes, ginger&black wicm. (block emoji=no) Chems (block emoji=no) BB	
23	White	Bottom				Today I'm just here to get my big d sucked dry, 8", thick and most importantly nice to look at. I'm otherwise chilled, educated, friendly. Accom. Slim toned. 4.20 friendly. No racial hang ups but only into 18-35.	
24	Black	Top	hung4sucker			No taps	
25	White	Top	Black guys wys				
26	White	Top	Bbc				
27	Black	Top					
28	Black	Top					

29	Black	Top	young bbc	just want a mouth to use that's all I don't fuck
30	Mixed	Versatile	Stardust emoji	Love my people of colour. Please be around my age range.
31	White	Top	Purple devil emoji	sexy guys 18-25. So Don't waste your time. Latino, Mixed, Black, Arab to the front. Don't answer to blank profiles unless you send pictures. No time wasters.
32	White	Bottom	Peach emoji (=ass/bottom) for top (emoji)	Muscles and sense of humour do it for me. Handsome Aussies have magic powers on me... smiley emoji. Cool mates and fun are welcome. General assumption applies - be fit, healthy, non-smoker & drugs free.
33	Latino	Top	Top emoji, kiss emoji	Soft spot for black-mixed [black 'okay' and 'peace' hand emojis]. No [black emoji]: group/3some/drugs/trans/under20. Only 1 on 1, anything else just say hi. Purple devil emoji. Don't ask for pics without sending first. Ain't got time for that. No endless chats. Travel mainly.
34	White	Bottom	(Star emoji) for black	I think I am cool and nice young guy. Let's chat and feel free to say hi. Drama free.
35	Mixed	Top	(Heart eyes emoji)	I HAVE ONE HELL OF A C*CK & KNOW HOW TO USE IT!! I (heart emoji) CUTE/SEXY WHITEBOYS! I NEED A HOLE TO PUSH IT IN!!
36	Black	Top	Top Of The Tops	Reply - Location/ into's/ likes? Before asking for mine. No Blk guys (moon face emoji) - Bi - Ttop, iDom, 9" inch, Discreet, 100% Clean. Blocking me really don't affect me. Subs (worship hands up emoji) - BUBBLE BUTTS (peach emoji=ass)
37	Mixed	Versatile	Black/Mix Only	Black/Mixed is my preference. Looking for friends, dates, chats. 420 Friendly (leaf emoji=weed) Anybody wanna be my sugar daddy? (crying with laughter emoji)
38	Mixed		Bobby Lee	Prefer black and mixed black. Safe sex only!!! Negative and sti free 4/11/16
39	Black		Melodickal	Open to ALL races, especially if distinctive in look and appeal. LTR orientated but goin with flow until I find that compatible complimentary companion. I prefer quick meet'n'greet over the long excessive chat. If I send pix, kindly state if not your type!
40	Black	Versatile	read profile	black and mixed only! Looking to connect with sexy masculine bruddahs.
41	White			New to this! Easy going guy, just looking to chat for now. Preference: drama free, non-fem black guys
42	Black		Black boy	Looking for someone who blew me away, Blondes and gingers in front of the queue. Please, no NSA.
43	Mixed		I (heart emoji=love) Melanin	Masculine athlete for same. Prefer dudes - from olive to dark melanin (Mediterranean to mixed & black dudes). Blank profiles & no (camera emoji=pics) = no response
44	White	Bottom	Black Only!	Early MTF trans woman. Fully dedicated 24/7 worshipper for black & mixed race men. Owned property and sex slave. No limits or gag reflex. My body belongs to superior and alpha black men. Preference for raw and group sex but safe and 1on1 is also enjoyed.
45	White	Bottom	Bottom 4 BBC	Sex addict, sissy, cuckold lover and adult entertainer. Exclusive 24/7 worship for black tops, verse, and bottoms. No limits or gag reflex. Will do anything for a black man, literally. Impregnate me.
46	White	Bottom	TV Slut	Fat Ass White Bitch. Here to fulfil the sexual needs, fantasies and desires of straight Black men. NO PICS? NO REPLY! SIMPLE
47	Black	Top	GiveMeYourMouth	Milk me with your mouth (kiss emoji; aubergine emoji=dick; milk bottle emoji). Sexy smooth young white guys.
48	Black	Bottom	T	It's pretty simple don't get it twister (hands up emoji) Laid back guy (chocolate emoji=black) Black/Mix to front cuddles, coffee, chats, maybe more. Live southeast, work all over the uk. I will never have time for guys from Clapham & your racist grandma should drink bleach.
49	Mixed	Versatile	notyourtype	Down for whatever. Top emoji. Latin guys to the front (heart eyes emoji)
50	White	Top	Top xl	Bi guy not out. Always safe! Please be straight acting. More into dark skin.
51	White	Top	Bi boy	My display pic keeps getting rejected (hands up emoji). Hygiene is paramount. Not desperate. I drive and accom. Fun is good.
52	Black	Top	Keep Winning	Black and mixed only please. DL DownLow. Discrete.
53	White	Bottom		Into rugby players and have a soft spot for gingers and blonds (smiley face emoji). But it's all moot if you don't have a fun loving personality. MOOT. If this were beauty and the beast let's just say I'd turn into a little spoon (spoon emoji).
54	Black			Someone cool would be great. Black Guys Preferably. Chilled laid back guy here.

55	South Asian	Top	AccomNow	Long haired Asian Top. Into all races myself. Up for good fun.
56	White	Versatile	FunNow (Tongue Emoji; Aubergine Emoji)	Leaving London on Sept 15th (crying emoji) Visiting from Spain (Spanish flag emoji) Looking for fun and whatever happens. Love London black guys!
57	Mixed	Bottom	Anyone Drive? (Car emoji)	yo! Mandem on the streets n bitch in the sheets! Banter, friendship and amazing sex! If the foreplay ain't right you ain't entering the pussy lol. Yes lots of kissing. Only into black/mix guys! Im very discreet non scene guy. No face pics sorry (devil emoji, snide eyes emoji, kiss emoji)
58	Asian	Bottom	Habibti	Available in Liverpool 09/09-12/09. 2 tops? (Cancan girls emoji). Prep'd bottom. Openminded. (Heart emoji) gingers Irish Scottish Scandinavians etc.
59	Asian	Bottom	Sucker	Asian guy love (heart eyes emoji) olo
60	Other	Bottom	sucker sub	sucker looking to suck. Can suck for long while u relax. Only into clean guys. Not into camp, fem or asian.
61	White	Versatile	H H (High n Horny) Fun Now	Up for most things. Chilled out play with one or more. I particularly like SE Asian guys. Vers.
62	Black	Top		into black and mixed only.
63	White	Top	MadeInGreece	Doctor on a masters degree. "Can you take 9 inches? Why, are you gonna fuck me 3 times?" (Crying with laughter emoji)
64	White	Versatile	Angel	Remember, black trans women and femme (queen emoji) got us the rights we have today, masc4masc guys haven't done shit for anyone.
65	White	Vers Top	(Irish flag emoji; fox emoji)	8.5 in. (Union Jack flag emoji; purple devil emoji; finger up + finger down emoji =top/bottom=verse). Coffee and kink? Fun, explore. Mix of ages types and ethnicities are fun to engage with (Sunglasses smiley emoji)
66	White	Versatile	mcl	"Rugby lad" is just the gay version of "horse girl". (Weight lifting, cycling and rock climbing emojis). Chems and bareback aren't my bag. (5 different skin tone thumbs up emojis from white through to dark brown, ending with yellow).
67	White	Vers Bottom		Vers guy looking for friends and FWB. Often looking for a third with my boyfriend. Please send a pic if you don't have one. No
68	Black	Vers Bottom	(Down arrow emoji=bottom) FunNow	racists, femmephobes, body shamers, transphobes please. FTM friendly! No drugs and safe. discreet bi guy looking for fun with hung guys, I can handle. Really love black guys (thumbs up emoji-yellow) I host
69	White	Bottom	Bottom 4 BBC	Vers bottom for masculine bruddahs - black/mix only!
70	South Asian	Top	Looking 4 cocksucker	White bottom for BBC. For all the ignorant, it isn't racist, it's just a preference! Big, round white bubble butt for black men to use and enjoy.
71	White	Top	Cultivated	Looking for an oral sub. Into gag/deepthroat/sloppy head sessions, preference for smooth white twinks.
72	Black	Top Versatile	Links	Educated and cultivated professional guy seeking a range of encounters, from DTF to dinner and trips to the theatre. I'm into all races, but generally prefer masculine guys who keep themselves in shape, 25-40.
73	Black		Discreet fun!	GI gym-fit black dude seeking black/mixed bottoms (only) for links. Be local - SE or central and be able to accom.
74	White	Top	Sexy BI for CD	Looking to play with guys who are straight acting/looking. Not into femme, masculine only. Preference for black/mix.
75	Black		(Squinting emoji)...	Really hot bi guy who loves girly boys. Your pic gets mines. Not into chems, so clean, smooth, genuine people only please. White is my preference.
76	Black	Bottom	Black bottom	black masc brudda's only bro (green tick emoji). No expectations. Hnh (quarter moon emoji).
77	Black		Given name (redacted to preserve anonymity)	Black bottom for black top.
78	Black	Top	Given name (redacted to preserve anonymity)	Brother to Brother. Black guy looking for other black guys to chill with!
79	Black	Top	Black c(aubergine emoji)ock	into filmmaking, screenwriting and love sleeping :) I don't gym. So freaking lazy. (stroke chin emoji). Thinking about starting gym. PS. Under 22. must have a face pic. Not into white guys.

80	Mixed	Top	(Top arrow = top emoji) Union Jack. Jamaican Flag.	MixedTop Here 4 Fun/Mates (Peach emoji=ass; aubergine emoji= dick; black fist bump emoji [fisting?]). Open to more if connection forms. If you message1stt send face and I'll do the same! I travel - I can see messages read, so don't ignore. Latin, mixed and Arab Guys to the front (heart eyes emoji = love what I'm seeing)
81	Black	Bottom	LOOKING FOR NOW	Nice African dude with bubble butt, like to satisfy a good Top or bang an slim bottom with nice ass. No oral alone please and no tap. On PREP. Can't accom.
82	White	Versatile	Charlie?	I'm really into skinny guys, white twinks to the front of the queue.
83	Black	Top	Mature 4 younger	Mature, fit, daddy type, dominant in bed, looking for younger twink. White +, sub ++
84	Asian	Versatile	Professional dude	Professional guy looking to go on some dates, no NSA! Into other professionals. No racial hang ups
85	Asian	Bottom	Sub	Thai sub boy for dominant sugar daddy
86	Black	Top	4 bottoms	Pref. black/mix bubble butts, the bigger the better. If you white make sure you packing.
87	White	Top	Young 4 young	Into big round butts for fun. New to Grindr. Love black guys with bubble butts! Be under 25 and gym fit!
88	Black	Top	4 twink	Black top for twink bottom, preference for white but open-minded, just be young, slim, smooth and able to take dick.
89	White	Top	Top 4 bottom	Professional gym-fit top, accom in my own place. Be good looking, in shape and up for fun (not into endless chat). Latin guys are a big turn on. Also looking for dates if we hit it off.
90	White	Versatile		Let's make this interesting! Too many inflexible on here. I can be an aggressive top or a sub bottom depending on the mood and who I'm with. Into all races, gender types, but prefer under 40 and in-shape.
91	White	Versatile	Gym buddy?	Masc guy looking for other masc guys, ideally looking for a gym buddy. Hairy and beared ++. Love Latinos.
92	South Asian	Bottom	Chems?	Horny bottom into long chem sessions with hung tops. Love white guys who want a brown sub slave in bed.
93	Black	Versatile	4 Bruddas	Masc dude for black/mix bruddas only. White guys ain't nothing gonna change my mind, so don't waste both our times!
94	Asian	Versatile	Virgin Active	Japanese top guy. Can accom. Go to Virgin Active gyms. Like caucasian twinks (heart eyes emoji).
95	South Asian	Top	East London	Paki guy based in East L, looking other pakis and discreet masc men. I will become your preference.
96	Black	Bottom	Black/Mix Only	Black bottom for black/mixed only. Who can accom? I drive. Also into groups.
97	Black	Bottom	Who's out tonight?	Heading Vauxhall later, who's out? VGL (very good looking) black guy, hung, bubble butt, for gym-fit of all races, but must be hung.
98	Black	Bottom		Just checking this app, not into long chats, prefer to meet and we can take from there. Am not here for your BBC fantasies, get off my profile with that shit.
99	White	Bottom	Hungry bottom	Hungry bottom taking loads in (place name redacted). Neg on PREP. Chems-friendly. Love DL black guys!
100	White		Nubianslover	Fit, Masculine, very handsome European, looking for masculine dark skin only. If you are under 30, please make sure you can hold a conversation. No Drugs.
101	White		4 darker	Sorted muscle guy ideally looking for black and mixed fellas but open to suggestions. Totally discreet.

Grindr Profiles Coding Examples

Below are examples of my coding work on the profiles. Coding is in the square [brackets]. This represents the latest stage of my analysis, once I had had the opportunity to develop my themes and revisit the profiles in light of them.

GU4:

Profile Title: BBC Gangbang [*“BBC” = genitalisation of black men; contested terminology; Gangbang = excessive sexuality, fungibility of black body; GU is not Black, so where do they fit into the “BBC Gangbang”? Transracial identification?*]

Profile Text: My place [*Evokes “know your place!”, which seems to invert ‘racial hierarchy; can also be read ontologically, “my role in life is”*] as a white sissy [*racialised, gendered figure of emasculation; white masculinity is castrated here – again inverting historic discourse of Black masculinity – can be read in terms of assuaging liberal guilt, see Scott {2010}*] is on my knees [*implies begging and/or worship of something sacred – sacred/profane discourse, distinction collapses here*] surrounded by hard and horny black men [*can read this as “always hard, always horny” – black hyper-sexuality; also a certain kind of racialised biopolitics of the penis/libido*]. BBC exclusive! [Conveying dedication and/or alludes to erotics of “once you go black...”]. Over 3k Black men from 17 countries [*excess, user’s age is listed as 22, so seems more likely than not that this is fantasy, not reality – maybe a way of reading entire profile, which is unusually and conspicuously graphic in content and tone by comparison with Grindr ‘norms’*] worshipped [*sacred and profane again*]. I also run my own professional [sex worker? Also implies systematisation, industrialisation and racist science experiments] and discreet [meant to signify racialised discourse of DL? (see Snorton, 2014)] sexual worship [sacred and profane again] and cum collection program [*racist science experiments again. Reduction of black men to bodily fluids – ref. accompanying profile photo, vat of semen*] and exclusive to black men [“Once you go black...” discourse again].

GU11:

Profile Title: Topdaddy *[gay porn trope “daddy”, spectre of intergenerational sex, with its long history in gay male communities; after ancient Greek convention, the older man is – ‘naturally’ – the top]*

Profile Text: Brazilian Top *[locates self in terms of ‘foreignness’ also locates specifically in a highly racialised ‘post’-colonial society defined by enduring ‘racial’ inequality, prejudice and discrimination]*, refined and honest guy looking for sweet bottom boys *[intergenerational element is emphasised by “boys”, “sweet” seems to imply looking for not-too-assertive ie. bottom is a personality not just a sexual position and e.g. seems to rule out ‘power bottoms’]*. Living some months in London. I love delicate, clever and sweet guys *[again delicate and sweet imply ‘bottom’ personality, clever mediates this – given the figure becomes racialised as White in the final sentence, can also be read as equation of Whiteness with intelligence]*. Female boys and bitches are also welcome *[object of desire now explicitly gendered, gender difference mediated by androgynous formulation ‘female boys’]*. I prefer 18-30 years-old white guys *[age re-emphasised, ‘race’ comes in at the last, almost as an afterthought and yet we can read the entire profile in terms of it]*.

Appendix B – Materials pertaining to the biographical research interviews (Chapter 5)

Interview Transcript Coding Example

The following is an example of my coding of the interview transcripts, and comes from the opening part of Anthony's interview (case study 2). My coding is italicised in the square [brackets].

Interviewer: "As you know I am researching how so-called 'racial preferences' play out across Grindr. In order to do that I'm interested in your wider experience of race as it relates to your sexual and romantic life, including your experiences before Grindr came into being, and both your on- and off-line experiences to date. To that end, can you please tell me the story of your life in terms of your sexual and romantic preferences? Take your time and feel free to discuss any experience that seems relevant, even peripherally. I won't interrupt. Once you feel you've said all you want to, I will take some time to review my notes and generate some follow-up questions. So that question again, can you please tell me the story of your life in terms of your sexual and romantic preferences?"

Participant: Where do you start? (laughs) What do you say? Eeeerrrrm. So just my preferences, I've only ever dated black guys. Erm (pause) so only really in relationships with black guys, errrr (pause) errrrm I do, I get asked this question on a, on a sometimes a daily basis, "oh he's black? Oh!" *[defensive]* Like yeah why is that an issue? Cos for me it's never been an issue of who I date or who I choose to date, it's just something close to me *[sexuality as innate]*. Errrrm, I see it as what I'm attracted to. And so there are white guys, no offence *[is this directed at white interviewer? Does it suggest Anthony locating himself by way of identification outside of Whiteness?]*, they're cute, they're pretty, but they're not what I (pause) want in a partner. I think when it comes to sex and pure like the animalistic side of things, it's just, it's just a physical attraction *[sexuality as physical; specifically in relation to Black objects of desire can be construed in terms of its echoes of Black sexuality as animalistic/discourse of Black as not quite human]*. I can see the beauty, and I can see the aesthetic, and I can see what people find attractive in other ethnicities – like Asian, errr Latin, mixed raced,

White – but to me it's just not what I'm after, it's just not what, what I'm drawn to *[drawn in, so ultimately passive construction of desire/sexuality here]*. (swallows) I think, I remember, I think when I was at school, which is not too long ago, but fast approaching long ago (laughs), erm, a teacher said to me once that actually people who you are attracted to romantically – be it sexually or for a relationship – is generally the people that you grew up with for sort of the first five years of your life. And so I grew up in quite a black area, I went to nursery with quite a number of black people *[nurture discourse of desire/sexuality, framed in terms of authority figure – teacher; link to discussion of Rachel Dolezal and tranracialism later; suggests early and ongoing identifications with Black psychic objects]*, and then when I think back, it to me coincides with what that study was saying to what I actually have now as an adult in my romantic areas of my life. But overall I think people will try to say that it's racist [, some people will try to say that it's discriminatory, sometimes people say that you're overtly sexualizing a certain race of by which , cos of certain stereotypes *[pathologisation discourse - three formulations of racialised sexuality (specifically of white man attracted to black men, against which Anthony seems to be defending throughout the interview)]*, to me that's not actually what I'm about, to me it's just what I'm purely attracted to, and you can't help it, some people like ice cream, some people, some people like the colour red, some people don't, it's just personal preference don't *[“Just a preference” discourse – sexuality as consumer choice/taste]*. We don't always know where it comes from, we just know that it's what feels right for us. And that can change *[Sexuality formulated as fluid now]*. So I can remember that I for years would never eat green beans, and then last year I was like, “Oh my God I love these”, it changed *[Fluidity framed in terms of taste analogy]*. So I'm not saying that it's set in stone, your sexuality is very fluid, your sexuality is who you're attracted to, your gender you're attracted to, the race, the ethnicity, the things you like to do during sex *[broadened discuss of sexuality – aims and acts, not just objects]*, it's all one big sort of spectrum and one big sort of complicated sphere, and the type of the skin colour you're attracted to *[Epidermal discourse - ‘race’ is reduced to skin colour here]*, it's just a piece of that, it's just a part of that, it's not even predetermined [Nurture discourse of sexuality again], it's just where you come from and your ideas and you form an opinion, and that to me is everything.

Yeah... is that alright? *[seeking reassurance]* (laughs hard) *[this seemed at least somewhat nervous]*.

Life narrative and themes

In addition to the transcript excerpt, below I have reproduced the synoptic 'life narrative' I wrote-up for Anthony, and the list of 'themes' from his interview, focusing specifically on the deployment of discourses and his positions in relation to them (without including detail about psychic processes at this stage). I include the below as evidence of my methodological 'workings out' and to track how my readings of the interviews developed; I think it is important to emphasise that I produced them during a relatively early stage of analysis, before I had written-up the interviews, and about 18 months before I submitted my thesis.

Anthony life narrative:

Anthony grew up in a working class part of London, which he described as a predominantly Black area. He framed his exclusive attraction to black men in two primary ways: as a product of his childhood, using the argument that the first five years are key to later attractions, and that he had gone to a predominantly black nursery and primary school; and secondly, that through this proximity he had developed a deep affinity with "blackness" and diverse black cultures, and that there was a link between this (including "getting on especially well with black people at work") and his romantic preferences. He has only ever dated black men, and described experiences with women, who he said were all white – he said this came down to who he felt comfortable spending time around, which was white women and black men. Described there being "a lot" of white guys into black men and said although he didn't feel it personally, there was an avid sense of competition amongst some of them for the affections of eligible black men. There was a contradiction between a desire to espouse "colour-blindness" and the fact his sexuality was structured around two distinctly racialised objects of Black men and White women. This interview made

me think of Windance Twine's concept of "racial literacy" and both its potential and inherent limitations.

Anthony discourses and identificatory positions:

- Preference discourse - preference as innate, 'deep inside' and consequently, as something that cannot/should not be interrogated or thought about – psychosocial 'defense'
- Discourse/s of Whiteness – negatively-accented identification with Whiteness, but a continual to/fro into and out of it. Limits to 'racial literacy' – Black partner not "Black enough" because can't cook *majority Black country's* food. White men attracted to Black men as persecuted (inc. use of "reverse racism" discourse), conveying deep discomfort and anxiety (links to my own framing of the ways racialised sexuality can be talked about)
- Positively-accented identification with "blackness" and Black partners as providing access to Black culture – invoked and problematised a "trans" discourse to exemplify this
- Sexuality vs. platonic distinction introduced to anchor Anthony to Black cultures in a way that moved beyond sex – however many of these analogies – food, colours, music – were sensual objects, not strictly-platonic, and this manoeuvre also resulted in pat analogies between racialised sexuality and liking food or particular colours (although these also can't be excluded entirely from a 'racial' frame)
- Whiteness also present in a sense of White 'ownership' and competition over black men – see discussion about White peers
- Difference as key logic of sexuality – difference here has become synonymous with 'racial' difference and specifically blackness



Information sheet

Department of Psychosocial Studies
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30 Russell Square
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020 7079 0775

Title of Study: *Grinding* race: interrogating the phenomenon of ‘racial preference’ on the MSM dating-app *Grindr*

Name of researcher: Dominic Reilly

The study is being done as part of my PhD research in the Department of Psychosocial Studies, Birkbeck, University of London. The study has received ethical approval.

This study wants to explore the phenomenon of so-called ‘racial preferences’ in the realm of sex and relationships, examining how such preferences are expressed, experienced and lived-out, and how they come into being. It also seeks to explore this within the specific context of the MSM hook-up app, *Grindr*, considering how *Grindr* might act as a site of condensation and enactment for ‘race’ and racialising processes.

If you agree to participate you will agree a convenient time and place for me to interview you for about an hour. You are free to stop the interview and withdraw at any time.

Your data will kept be anonymous by immediately changing all names and identifying information on transcripts and will be stored on a secure external hard drive, which is password protected and only accessible by the researcher.

The analysis of you participation in this study will be written up in a report of the study for my degree. You will not be identifiable in the write up or any publication which might ensue.

The study is supervised by Dr Gail Lewis and Dr Bruna Seu who may be contacted at the above address and telephone number (you can ask to be redirected to their office telephone lines).



Consent Form

Title of Study: *Grinding* race: interrogating the phenomenon of 'racial preference' on the MSM dating-app *Grindr*

Name of researcher: Dominic Reilly

I have been informed about the nature of this study and willingly consent to take part in it.

I understand that I will not be made identifiable in any conversation, documents, publications or talk related to the research.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I am over 16 years of age.

Name

—

Signed

—

Date

—

There should be two signed copies, one for participant, one for researcher.